HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

HOTCHKISS AND KILDUFF

BUSINESS ENGLISH	0 *General Purposes*	1 *Adaptation to the Reader*	2 *Qualities*	3 *Unity*	4
Chap. I **The Substance** 1	10 Definition	11 Adaptation	12 Five C's	13 Unity	
Chap. II **The Whole Composition** 2	20 Technique	21 Adaptation	22 Qualities	23 Unity	
Chap. III **The Paragraph** 3	30 Functions	31 Length	32 Essentials	33 Unity	
Chap. IV **The Sentence** 4	40 Definition	41 Length	42 Clearness	43 Unity	
Chap. V **The Word** 5	50 Principles	51 Adaptation	52 Correctness	53* Spelling	
Chap. VI **The Business Report** 6	60 Functions	61 Adaptation	62 Qualities	63 Unity	
Chap. VII **Grammar** 7	70 Definition	71* Possessives	72* Case	73* Reference	
Chap. VIII **Punctuation and Capitals** 8	80 Functions	81* Arbitrary Uses	82* Small Separations	83* Sentence Separations	
Chap. IX **The Display of the Letter** 9	90 Functions	91* Heading	92* Inside Address	93* Salutation	

Complete information explaining the use of this chart is given in the preface.

5 *Connection*	6 *Emphasis*	7 *Proportion*	8 *Tone*	9 *Style*
15 Connection	16 Emphasis	17 Proportion	18 Tone	19 Policy
25 Connection	26 Emphasis	27 Proportion	28 Tone	29 Style
35 Connection	36 Emphasis	37 Proportion	38 Tone	39 Form Paragraphs
45 Connection	46 Emphasis	47 Proportion	48 Euphony	49 Variety
55 Connectives	56 Forceful Diction	57 Proportion	58 Tone	59 Style
65 Connection	66 Emphasis	67 Proportion	68 Tone	69 Style
75* Agreement (verbs)	76* Tense	77* Mood	78* Participles	79* Adjectives and Adverbs.
85* In Compound Sentences	86 For Emphasis	87 Capitals	88 For Tone	89 Style
95* Complimentary Close	96* Signature	97* Miscellaneous	98* Envelope	99* Official Letters

* These sections do not follow the general scheme of numbering, but are numbered somewhat arbitrarily.

Mary Llewelyn
2532 Linden Ave.
Southgate, Ky.

UBearcatsC

(U)BearCats

Mary Lewelyn
233 Linden Ave
Forestgate
Ky.

HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

By

GEORGE BURTON HOTCHKISS, M.A.
Head of the Department of Advertising and Marketing
New York University

AND

EDWARD JONES KILDUFF, M.A.
Professor of Business English
New York University

(Revised Edition)

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

Copyright, 1914, 1915, 1917, by G. B. Hotchkiss and E. J. Kilduff
Copyright, 1920, by Harper & Brothers
Printed in the United States of America

F-Y

CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. THE SUBSTANCE OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

What Business English Is 1
Adaptation in Substance 3
The Five C's 5
Unity in the Thought 7
Order of Ideas 10
Connection of Ideas 11
Emphasis of the Thought 12
Proportion of Thought 13
Tone in Ideas 14
Good Business Policy 15

II. THE COMPOSITION AS A WHOLE

The Technique of Business English 16
Adaptation of Language 17
The Essential Qualities of the Letter 19
Unity in the Letter 22
Order in the Letter 23
Connection in the Letter 24
Emphasis in the Letter 26
Emphasis by Proportion 29
The Tone of the Letter 30
The Style of the Letter 34

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
III.	THE PARAGRAPH	
	Functions of the Paragraph	36
	Paragraph Length	37
	Essentials of a Good Paragraph	40
	Unity in the Paragraph	41
	Order in the Paragraph	45
	Connection in the Paragraph	48
	Position Emphasis in the Paragraph	50
	Proportion in the Paragraph	51
	Tone of Paragraphs	52
	Form Paragraphs	53
IV.	THE SENTENCE	
	Sentence-making	56
	Sentence Length	58
	Clearness and Consistency in Sentences	61
	Unity in the Sentence	65
	Coherence	67
	Coördination and Subordination	70
	Emphasis Secured by Position	77
	Emphasis Secured by Proportion	80
	Euphony	81
	Variety in Sentence Structure	82
V.	WORDS	
	Principles of Word Use	85
	Adaptation of Words	87
	Correct Usage in Words	89
	Spelling	91
	Common Misuses of Words	99
	Connectives	117
	Forceful Diction	119

CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

Word Emphasis 124
Tone in Diction 125
Style in Diction 127

VI. BUSINESS REPORTS

The Importance of Business Reports 131
Adaptation in the Report 132
The Qualities of the Report 133
Unity in the Report 134
Coherence in the Report 137
Connection in the Report 141
Emphasis in the Report 141
Proportion in the Report 142
Tone in the Report 143
Style in the Report 144

VII. GRAMMAR

Grammar—Good Use in the Sentence 145
Nouns and Pronouns—Possessive Case . . . 147
Pronouns—As Subject and Object 149
Pronouns—Reference 153
Pronouns — Agreement in Gender and Number 156
Verbs—Agreement in Number and Person. 159
Verbs—Tense 164
Verbs—Subjunctive Mood 167
Verbs—Participles, Gerunds, Infinitives . . 168
Adjectives and Adverbs 172

VIII. PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALS

The Functions of Punctuation and Capitals 175
Arbitrary Uses of Punctuation 176

CHAPTER PAGE

Separations of Small Units 178
Separations of Sentences 181
Relationships within Complex Sentences .. 182
Relationships in Compound Sentences 184
Punctuation for Emphasis 188
Capitalization 191
Tone as Affected by Punctuation 194
Good Style in Punctuation 195

IX. THE MECHANICAL DISPLAY OF THE LETTER

General Considerations of Display 198
The Heading 202
The Inside Address or Superscription 204
The Salutation 210
The Body of the Letter 211
The Complimentary Close 213
The Signature 214
Miscellaneous Points 215
The Envelope 217
Official Letters 218
Formal Official Letters 220
Informal Official Letters 220

PREFACE

THOSE who have occasion to write business messages, especially letters and reports, appreciate the value of having within reach a handy reference manual that answers the many perplexing questions of usage in language and form. To fail to answer them correctly may easily lead to clumsy writing and even to serious monetary loss; yet the average correspondent cannot carry all the answers in his head, even if he has once learned them. The manual that yields him the information quickly is almost as indispensable as the dictionary, and is consulted almost as frequently.

To reach its greatest usefulness to the business man, such a manual should not be a mere presentation of the traditional rules of grammar and rhetoric, with illustrations from the old classics of literature. Many of these rules are more honored in the breach than in the observance; strict adherence to them is almost sure to result in a pedantic and ineffective message. Rather should the book give in systematic, non-technical form the principles of business English that have been derived from the usage and successful practice of leading business houses.

The *Handbook of Business English*, originally published six years ago and reprinted five times, was compiled with this ideal in mind. In it English is treated as

a practical tool to accomplish practical results—as a medium not merely for correct expression, but also for effective impression. The rules it presents have all met the acid test of practical utility. It does include some traditional rules of grammar and rhetoric that occasionally lead to awkwardness or pedanticism, but such rules are marked with an asterisk (*).

The cordiality with which the book has been adopted and used by business men is ample evidence that its viewpoint is sound. Universities and schools have also welcomed it as a valuable aid in teaching business English and correspondence. Both in the office and in the classroom it has proved a time-saver in correcting the faults of correspondents and students and in guiding them toward a better mastery of the art of writing.

This present edition of the *Handbook of Business English* is a complete revision. The rules have been brought up to date and made to conform with present usage. New material, for which a demand has been indicated, has been added.

More important still, a new decimal numbering system has been adopted. By means of this it will be possible at any time to insert or revise rules whenever changes in usage necessitate, without affecting the general scheme of numbering. The English language is a living organism and its growth and change must be speedily reflected in the dictionary and the manual of usage, if these are to be genuinely serviceable.

This numbering system will also be found a great aid to quick reference. The nine chapters deal with the main subjects upon which guidance is needed, as follows: 1, Substance; 2, Whole Composition; 3, Paragraph; 4, Sentence; 5, Word; 6, Reports; 7, Grammar; 8, Punctuation; 9, Display (mechanical form).

Each of the chapters is divided into nine sections, the first digit of which indicates the number of the chapter, and the second digit the particular phase of the subject. There are ten of these phases in each chapter, as follows: 0, General; 1, Adaptation; 2, Qualities; 3, Unity; 4, Order; 5, Connection; 6, Emphasis (position); 7, Proportion; 8, Tone; 9, Style. Thus, Section 11 deals with the *adaptation of substance to the reader's viewpoint;* Section 34 deals with *order in the paragraph;* Section 46 covers *sentence emphasis,* and so on.

Each section includes as many rules as may be needed to cover the phase of the subject adequately. In no case are there more than ten rules in a section; hence every rule is designated by a number of three digits (or in the hundreds) beginning with 100 and ending with 999. The first two digits always indicate the section. Thus, rules 340 to 349, inclusive, relate to *order in the paragraph;* rules 460 to 469, inclusive, relate to *sentence emphasis.*

It takes only a few moments to familiarize oneself with the system (given in chart form at the beginning and end of the book). After that the head correspondent or the teacher can readily indicate on the margin of a letter or other written composition the general character of the fault by writing the general section number; as 11, 34, or 46. Even the numbers of the individual rules will soon become familiar so that without referring to the book he can write down 114, 344, 462, and the like. Teachers and correspondence supervisors will appreciate the great value of this feature in saving their time and in obviating the monotonous labor of writing comments and corrections.

The authors have attempted to embody in the *Handbook of Business English* every improvement that experience has suggested in the six years that have elapsed

since the original book of this title was published. They confidently hope that it will prove to be worthy of a place among the few books that the business man and the teacher and student of business regard as essentials of a working library.

G. B. H.
E. J. K.

New York, *April, 1920.*

HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

Chapter I

The Substance of Business English

10

What Business English Is

100. Business English includes all written messages that are used in transacting business. Because of its distinctive purposes and method it is justly regarded as a separate branch of English Composition. The principles governing it are somewhat different from those governing other branches.

101. Business English is a useful art rather than a fine art. Its purpose, like the purpose of business, is to gain profit. This profit may come through the immediate response of the reader or through establishing his goodwill as the basis for later response.

102. The value of a business English message is, therefore, determined by its effectiveness in securing favorable response from those to whom it is directed. It is the art of impression rather than expression.

103. Business English must not be considered a separate language. There are a few terms peculiar to busi-

ness, but mastery of these does not constitute mastery of business English. Frequent use of such expressions as "pursuant to," "beg to advise," "herewith inclosed," and "acknowledging same," are more likely to harm than to help the impression.

104. There are a few situations in which the main purpose of a business message is to serve as a record and in which, therefore, a fixed form may be used. Such are the lease, the mortgage, and the bond. These are primarily legal documents, however, and the writer of business messages has little occasion to use them, or any other fixed forms. Set forms have practically no place in the creative or personal side of business.

105. Most business English messages take the place of a personal representative and do his work. They should produce much the same effect. Stilted, semi-legal phrases, or any other language that would not be used in personal conversation, should not appear in the written message. Pretentious "literary" language is also inappropriate. Business English is typically conversational—in many cases, colloquial.

106. Business English is a matter of thinking as well as technique; of substance as well as style. The first requisite for an effective impression is a well-formulated idea.

107. The writer must know the motives that induce people to respond; he must comprehend the psychological problem involved in any given situation. He can then make use of this knowledge in formulating the substance of his message.

108. "Follow the line of least resistance," is an axiom of business English. It demands ideas that will most readily be received by the reader, and forms that will

cause least friction and least waste of his time and attention.

109. The difference between business English and literary composition is largely a difference in point of view. In literary composition the writer is concerned with expressing his own ideas and feelings in a way that will entertain or inform; in business English he is concerned with the ideas and feelings he can evoke in the reader. He is not satisfied merely to please or instruct; he wishes also to cause action to his own profit. His message is built from the reader's standpoint. It is adapted to him.

11

Adaptation in Substance

110. The golden rule of business English is, "Adapt the message to the reader." Every transaction is between two parties. When one party is buying, the other is selling; when one is collecting, the other is paying; when one is getting employment, the other is hiring an employee. Present the matter from the reader's viewpoint.

111. There should be a genuine attempt to render service and to show service. As the salesman secures an order by showing the benefits the buyer will derive from the article, so the writer of any message should show the good results of accepting his proposition. He should sell his idea.

Bad: We need these goods; ship them immediately.
Better: Prompt shipment of this order will probably lead to our turning to you to supply our future needs for this material.

112. To get the right viewpoint it is necessary not only to know your product or proposition, but also to

know the reader you are trying to reach. You must find a point of contact in his present interests.

113. The point of contact in the reader's interests must be connected with the talking-point (or distinctive merit) of your product or proposition. The benefits you offer must be actual benefits you can render. In practically every proposition there is some special advantage the reader will gain. Seek this out and present it.

114. The substance of a business English message should be adapted to the reader's character. His viewpoint often differs according as he is conservative or radical, cautious or daring, deliberate or brisk. A letter of application to a banker might well lay more stress upon the candidate's integrity (as shown by the recommendations of previous employers) than a letter to a manufacturer. The reply to any letter should make use of the arguments that are best adapted to the character revealed in this letter.

115. There should also be adaptation to his mood. A person who has just made a complaint must be approached in a different way from one who has expressed praise. Use ideas that harmonize with the reader's mood.

116. When a business message must be addressed to a group (as in advertisements and form sales-letters), it is often wise to investigate carefully the motives which influence their buying in this particular field. Such an investigation enables the writer to select the selling appeal that will be most likely to call forth a favorable response.

117. It must be borne in mind that a publicly printed message will reach many people to whom it is not specifically addressed. Adaptation to its intended readers

should never result in the use of ideas or arguments that will be distasteful or offensive to others.

12

The Five C's

120. There are five essential qualities that contribute to an effective impression. These are Clearness, Correctness, Conciseness, Courtesy, and Character. The reader judges a letter or other business message on the basis of its possession or lack of these qualities. They are a result partly of the style [see Sections 22, 32, 42, 52] and partly of the substance or ideas.

121. Remember that the effect, not the intention, is the standard of measuring these qualities. The writer cannot excuse deficiencies by saying, "It was clear to me," or "I did not mean to be discourteous."

122. The first three of these qualities are necessary to secure *economy of attention.* In other words, the strength of an impression depends largely upon its saving of the reader's time and energy. Certainly if it wastes his time and energy—fails to economize his attention—it will not make the kind of impression to which he responds readily. Clearness, correctness, and conciseness are necessary to economize attention.

123. Clearness is present in the substance of a message if the meaning can be grasped *immediately and unmistakably,* and with little mental effort on the part of the reader. To secure this quality the writer must first of all know exactly what he wants to say. Often it is helpful to make a rough outline of the points to be covered. In answering a letter it is particularly helpful

to note in the margin the main points of the reply. Such a method prevents the loose, random thinking that is sure to result in vague, rambling expression.

124. Correctness is present in the substance of a message if the ideas are truthful and are consistent with recognized business methods. Doubt is always distracting, and unless the reader feels full confidence that the representations of the writer are correct he will not be likely to respond favorably. In addition, the method of handling the situation should be consistent with good business practice.

125. Conciseness is present in the substance of a message if there is no unnecessary or irrelevant material. Conciseness is brevity together with completeness. The principle of adaptation to the reader should be borne in mind in this connection. Some readers, especially those whose time is valuable, demand that every message to them be compressed to the bare facts. Others need a more complete explanation and will take the time to read it. To secure conciseness it is practically necessary to plan the message in accordance with the principle of unity [see Section 13].

126. Courtesy is present in the substance of a message if the thought of service to the reader dominates the whole and there is a strict exclusion of material which would offend him. Accusations or implications of carelessness, ignorance, or dishonesty are particularly to be avoided. A letter can hardly be expected to make a favorable impression if it fails to recognize the mental and moral equality of the reader. It should rather be a *sympathetic* letter—sympathetic in the strict sense of *feeling with* the reader. It must not be antagonistic. [See also Rule 228.]

127. Character is present in the substance of the letter if the ideas are original and show the individuality of the writer. Imitation is destructive of this quality. While it is desirable to conform to good business practice in handling a given situation, it is unnecessary and undesirable to pattern strictly after the methods of others. Each writer or each business house should handle its correspondence in its own way, within the limits of the general, broad principles that govern business English.

128. All the qualities described here are qualities of the impression. To secure them it is usually necessary to plan the letter in accordance with certain structural principles. The architect may have as his ideal the creation of a building that will be dignified, stately, and beautiful, but to produce it actually he must follow certain laws of line and proportion. In the same way, the writer of a business message needs to work according to certain structural principles if he is to achieve an impression of Clearness, Correctness, Conciseness, Courtesy, and Character [see Sections 13–17].

13

Unity in the Thought

130. The first principle of construction is concentration or unity. The whole message must present one main idea and only one. The writer must select from the mass of possible ideas only those which contribute to the one central idea which he wishes to express.

131. The average brain cannot easily grasp two different ideas at the same time. Especially in business is this fact of importance. In actual business work there are so many distractions and so many problems demand-

ing a business man's attention that, unless a message has a singleness of purpose, it will not readily be understood. The writer should concentrate on one idea.

132. In the selection of those facts and ideas which are to aid in the thorough development of the main idea or purpose, the writer must exercise his judgment. In many cases this judgment is founded on business experience. The experienced advertising man or sales-letter writer, for example, has learned to select just those closely related points that will carry across to the reader the main idea.

133. Before writing a business message, the writer should see and clearly understand its main idea or purpose. In answering a complaint letter, for instance, the purpose is usually to conciliate the complainant so that he will continue to do business with the writer. All material should be included which is essential to accomplish this purpose. If the writer's aim is to get a direct sale from his letter, he should work to that end. If his aim is to get an inquiry which he is to follow up later, he should strive to make every idea in the letter subordinate to that aim. If the writer does not know precisely what course of action he desires the reader to take, how can he expect the reader to know?

134. All ideas essential to the completeness of the message should be included. A letter ordering goods should contain all the information that is necessary for the proper filling of the order. An application for a position should usually explain why the applicant is not employed; or, if employed, why he wishes to change.

135. All ideas not essential to the main idea should be excluded. Non-essentials only obscure and clog the thought and make it less likely that the important mes-

sage will be received and understood. An application for a position should not tell the hard-luck story of the applicant or explain why he *needs* the job.

136. It is especially important not to try to deliver two messages in the same letter. A letter that makes a complaint and orders goods at the same time is an example of a violation of the principle of unity and also of the principle of efficiency. In such a letter there is no unity of purpose. As a result, the reader receives a jumbled impression of what is wanted. But besides that fault there is the trouble caused in handling such a letter. It comes into the business house, where it is opened by the mail clerk, who sees from its first paragraph that it is a complaint letter. He accordingly sends it to the complaint department. The complaint department has other complaint letters on hand, and this particular letter may have to wait until the last. When its turn comes, the complaint man handles the letter, and then discovers that the letter should also go to the order department. It is then sent to the order department, where it has to await its turn for attention. This may be two or three days after it has been received by the concern. As a result of this violation of unity, the sender of the letter has to wait for his order, and perhaps writes in to find out why it has not been shipped immediately. All of this, of course, has been a waste of time and energy.

137. The matter of filing such a letter causes trouble, for the complaint department would want to keep a copy of it as would also the order department. This fact might mean that the letter would have to be copied. A good rule to follow in business writing, therefore, is that a separate letter should be written for each important message. The result would be a saving in time and trouble for all concerned.

138. In the writing of a long business message, it is helpful to block out roughly, either on paper or in the mind, the ideas that might be included. It is then possible to select the essential and reject the rest. Keep always in mind the main thought of the message and see that nothing is included that does not contribute to it.

14

Order of Ideas

140. The message should progress from beginning to end; it should be coherent. This demands that the component ideas should be arranged in logical order, or sequence.

141. Logical sequence of ideas is as essential as their proper selection. In colloquial use we often hear the remark, "No, I don't follow you." This remark means that the listener, from the arrangement of the ideas of the speaker, fails to comprehend exactly the speaker's reasoning. Some definite order or arrangement—and an order or arrangement that is apparent to the reader—is therefore necessary.

142. In most cases of letter-writing, the thought progresses from the viewpoint of the reader to that of the writer. Most people are interested primarily in themselves. If we speak about them, they will listen. The reader of a sales letter or advertisement is not interested to learn at the beginning that the writer wants him to do something. It is the purpose of the writer to lead the reader to that point.

143. An answer to a complaint furnishes a good example. The first step is to conciliate the complainant in order to get him to read the rest of the letter with an unbiased mind. The second step is to state the facts in

the case or the explanation of the causes. The third step is to make reparation, or tell why you cannot make it. The fourth step is to ask for a continuance of the business. The letter in Rule 337 shows how this idea is carried out in complete detail.

15

Connection of Ideas

150. Progress through the message demands close relationship between the ideas that follow one another. This is secured partly by technical devices, such as connectives [see Section 25], but the ideas themselves should also have some natural relevance.

151. In personal selling, it used to be customary to tell a funny story; in advertising, the picture of a pretty woman used to be a popular means of securing attention. These devices have been falling into disuse, because the interest they aroused was not relevant to the message to be delivered, and could not easily be related to it. On the other hand, it is always wise to appeal to a known interest of the reader, provided this interest can be easily translated into an interest in the message.

152. Interest is, in fact, the most powerful means of leading a reader through a message. Once he is started on a train of thought he can be kept moving to the end—if the ideas are dovetailed together by close and interesting relationship. In the following letter note how the progress flows through interest in Paris and interest in styles to interest in the style publication.

> Dear Madam:
>
> If you were in Paris to-day.
>
> You might spend this afternoon among the salons and shops, examining the exquisite models which Paquin, and Jenny, and

Poiret, and the other master designers have conceived as their offerings for this Spring.

If you were in Paris to-day—

But you are not in Paris.

And even if you were, you could not possibly see in one day, nor even in a week, the hundreds of new hats and gowns which the Paris representatives of *Vogue* have for months been gathering for its great Spring fashion number. . . .

153. Cause and effect relationship is a valuable means of connecting ideas. If you get a reader to accept a premise and then proceed to show the results of it in the logical manner of a geometrical theorem, then he cannot escape the conclusion. But each step must rest on the solid foundation of the previous one. At no time must the reader be allowed to stop and say, "Now I wonder if that is so."

16

Emphasis of the Thought

160. The ideas that contribute to a message are of varying degrees of importance. These degrees of importance must be emphasized in some way if the thought as a whole is to appear in its true value. One method of emphasis is to place the important ideas in the most important positions, the beginning and the end.

161. The beginning of a message should contain an idea that is important to the reader. This is the first idea he sees, and unless it impresses him favorably he may not read further.

162. The beginning of a letter often states the subject and summarizes the substance.

We take pleasure in sending you our quotations on wire screens, as requested in your letter of February 10.

In accordance with your request of January 25, I am submitting a summary of the estimated economies you will make in insurance and labor by taking space in one of our model loft buildings and giving up your present New York warehouse.

163. The beginning of a sales letter usually states a fact, makes a supposition, or asks a question that affects the reader's interests.

Have you considered the matter of lighting in your new building?

It is a noteworthy fact that at the recent meeting of the National Association of Hosiery and Underwear Manufacturers, they decided to curtail the production of most of their mills by 33 1/3%.

If Doctor Eliot were to call at your home to-night—

164. The beginning of a report usually outlines its scope and purpose and mentions the sources of its information.

165. The beginning of an advertisement usually makes a statement that appeals to the general interests of the class of prospects appealed to.

Safe for Baby's Tiny Table

The milk that baby drinks must be absolutely pure. No precautions are too great to assure this purity.

17

Proportion of Thought

170. Ideas in the business message should be given space commensurate with their importance. Size is an important method of emphasis, and the ideas that are to be impressed most deeply in the reader's mind should

occupy most space. Conversely, the ideas of minor importance in their development of the main thought should receive little space.

171. Negative ideas should not be developed at length. In expressing regret for the annoyance a customer has suffered, it is not wise to recall these annoyances by repeating them in detail. In adjusting a complaint it is unwise to take up a large part of the letter with excuses. In a sales letter little room should be given to attacks on competitors.

172. Ideas that are conventional or commonplace should receive little space. In a sales letter, for example, little space need be devoted to features possessed by all competing articles of the class described.

173. Ideas that are positive and distinctive should receive full attention. The exclusive advantages of an article being sold should be described at length; the positive steps being taken to serve the reader should be explained in detail.

174. A well-proportioned letter is the result of well-balanced, judicial thinking. Every writer of letters should strive to cultivate a nice sense of proportion.

18

Tone in Ideas

180. The tone of a business message is dependent largely upon the color of a man's thoughts. If his thoughts are cheerful and optimistic; if he believes in the natural honesty of those with whom he deals; if he has good-will toward mankind; then, and only then, will his letters have the tone that induces a favorable reaction.

181. The writer should take for granted the reader's fairness and reasonableness. He should assume that the reader will do what he is asked to do.

182. Tone is largely a question of diction [see Sections 28 and 58], but the diction cannot conceal thoughts that are antagonistic or offensive.

19

Good Business Policy

190. Good business English means not only good English, but good business. The written messages of a firm should be in keeping with the character and reputation of the firm; they should help to maintain and develop its good-will. To do this demands careful adherence to the highest standards of business policy.

191. Promptness is essential in handling correspondence. Letters should be answered within twenty-four hours of the time they are received.

192. Accuracy of statement should be carefully checked. A business house must stand back of its written or printed announcements, and errors may result in losses of money as well as good-will.

193. Conservatism is desirable. Extravagant claims arouse suspicion and tend to make readers class a firm among the less reputable and responsible members of the business community.

194. Progressiveness in methods is equally important. Use of the letter-press (except for legal communications) suggests an old-fashioned policy. The business messages of a house should be produced by the most advanced processes that science has devised.

Chapter II

The Composition as a Whole

20

The Technique of Business English

200. While good thinking is the foundation of business English, good technique is equally essential. Many a man who can *think* a good letter fails in his attempt to convey the thought to the reader. Technique must be mastered in order to make the desired impression.

201. It is in the business letter that the technique of writing is most important to the average man, because the great proportion of all his messages are written in this form. By these letters he and his firm are judged. Mastery of the business letter, moreover, is a valuable aid to the writing of any other form of business English.

202. So-called "model letters" are to be avoided. There is no such thing as a "best" collection letter, application letter, or adjustment letter. The forms of letters are not fixed, but elastic, and must lend themselves to a variety of uses. The writing of each letter is an individual problem, because no two readers and no two situations are identical. The copying or the imitation of a model letter not only results in a letter that may be unsuited to the occasion, but also weakens the power of the writer. No writer can develop ability by copying the work of others.

203. The technique of a business letter is not primarily a matter of rhetoric. Business men are not purists; they do not always demand nicety in language. It is not always necessary that polished diction and well-rounded sentences be used. It is not fatal if a business message should violate a rule or convention now and then. Contractions, slang, colloquialisms are allowed in many cases, and at times are more effective than pure English would be. All this is so because the important and, for that matter, the only real purpose of a business communication is the transmission of a message. If the reader understands the message just as the writer wishes it understood and acts just as the writer wishes him to act, there certainly can be no cause for complaint. At the same time one can never be sure that the message will be fully understood unless the expression is clear, the punctuation correct, and choice of words accurate. Hence it is necessary that certain rules of form be observed, for they will aid in getting the right result.

204. The first purpose of technique in the business letter is to economize the reader's attention. The message must be easy to read and easy to understand.

205. The second purpose of technique is to make the message cogent. The language and ideas should be such as to hold the reader's attention and to dispose him to take action favorable to the reader.

21

Adaptation of Language

210. The golden rule of technique in business English is adaptation to the reader. Just as the thought is formu-

lated from his viewpoint, so must the expression meet him on his own level.

211. The language must be simple enough to be surely within the reader's comprehension. The words must be in the vocabulary he is accustomed to read—better still, in the vocabulary he uses. The sentences and paragraphs must not be too complicated for his grasp.

212. The language may be in the peculiar "lingo" of the reader. A letter to a printer may be thickly sprinkled with printer's terms; similarly, medical terms are permissible in a letter to a doctor, and legal terms in a letter to a lawyer. Use of a man's own language brings him closer to you, and through it the letter becomes what it should be, a bond of connection.

213. The language of a letter should be suited to the reader's character. More precise expression and greater dignity of phrase are needed in a letter to a conservative person than in a letter to a progressive person. The character of the reader may be discovered from his own letter, or, if this is lacking, from his age, business or profession, or other known facts.

214. The language of a letter should be adapted to the reader's mood. Brisk, colloquial diction, and short, snappy paragraphs in a sales letter might draw response from a man who has been indifferent; but they would be most inappropriate in writing to him after he has angrily complained of faults in the goods. The letter to an irritated reader should be smoothly worded and conciliatory.

215. The language of a letter should be suited to its purpose. When the object is to draw immediate response the language may be more sensational and the movement

more rapid than when the purpose is merely to build goodwill.

22

The Essential Qualities of the Letter

220. Irrespective of the purposes of the letter or the characteristics and mood of the individual reader, there are some qualities that are essential to any good impression. Without them there can be neither economy of attention nor cogency. These qualities are: Clearness, Correctness, Conciseness, Courtesy, and Character—the five C's of business correspondence.

221. Analysis of successful letters reveals the fact that nearly all of them possess these qualities; unsuccessful letters usually lack one or more of them. Their presence or lack may not be perceived by the reader, but, nevertheless, his reaction to the letter is governed largely by them.

222. Clearness demands that the language be such as to reveal the thought quickly and unmistakably. Simplicity and exactness in the choice of words and careful planning in the construction of the larger units are among the most important means of securing clearness.

223. Letters that lack clearness are usually either obscure or vague or ambiguous. An obscure letter is one in which no meaning whatever is obtained except by painful and careful reading. Obscurity commonly results from using language that is not upon the reader's level. It may be below his level, as in the misspelled and ungrammatical letters of an illiterate writer, or above his level, as in the usual and "literary" letters of a pretentious writer.

Obscure (Illiterate): These goods must of been damaged before they left your store because they was all scratched when I opened the box and it was not stove in or nothing and I had the railroad claim agt look at it and he said it looked that way to him if it was your fault you should make it right with me.

Obscure (Pretentious): When the goods were unpacked, they were discovered to be marked by deep abrasions, which depreciated their appearance and salability in no small degree, although the case which served as their container was unbroken and gave no intimation of the damaged condition of the contents. The claim agent of the railroad made a rigid inspection, and stated it as his unqualified opinion that the damage must have occurred prior to the acceptance of the shipment by the carrier—an opinion in which I am reluctantly forced to coincide. You will, I trust, compensate me for the loss incurred.

224. A vague letter is one in which the meaning is indefinite. The reader gets a meaning, but it is not the writer's exact and entire meaning. Circumstances determine vagueness to a great extent. For example, if a large wholesaler in sugar were to receive a letter from one of his regular customers saying, "What has become of our 'sugars'?" the message would be said to be vague, for in this particular case the customer might have four or five orders in the process of being filled, and the wholesaler would not know exactly what was meant by "Our sugars." Again, if in answer to a letter that asks when an order will be shipped, the following response were sent, it would be said to be vague: "We think that perhaps we may be able to ship your order soon." Vagueness is caused by the use of inexact and unspecific words and expressions. This fault may be avoided by making the

thought exact and specific, and by using exact and specific words to express it.

225. An ambiguous letter is one that may be interpreted in either of two ways; in other words, it has a double meaning. This type of letter is most dangerous and frequently results in financial loss.

> Gentlemen:
>
> We have your letter acknowledging our order for fifty half-tone cuts, 133-line screen, same as used in our magazine advertisement, for newspaper use.
>
> We note that you advise us that these cuts would not be suitable for newspaper publication, and that a coarser, 75-line screen would be better. *Please have the cuts made as ordered for newspaper use.*
>
> Very truly yours,

226. Correctness in the technique of a business letter demands that it conform to good usage in all matters of form and language. Incorrectness in any detail, even in such matters as grammar and punctuation, is likely to distract the reader from the thought of the message. It may even arouse his contempt for the writer, for conspicuous incorrectness is generally accepted as an indication of ignorance or carelessness on the part of the writer, and either of these characteristics is undesirable in those with whom we transact business. A large part of this Handbook, therefore, is devoted to good usage in words, grammar, punctuation, and mechanical form of letters.

227. Conciseness demands that the letter be expressed in as few words as will give the complete meaning. Verboseness wearies the reader and wastes his time. On the other hand, the desire for brevity should not lead to the omission of words that are necessary for grammatical completeness.

228. Courtesy demands that the language be polite and in conformity with the ordinary amenities of business. "Please," "thank you," and "kindly" help to soften expressions that otherwise may appear harsh and they often smooth the way for the reader's response. Nor do they detract from the force of any impression; politeness is not inconsistent with urgency. It must be kept in mind that polite language cannot cloak a discourteous thought; it can only help to reveal a courteous one. [See Rule 126.]

229. Character demands that the language of the letter be original and individual; not stilted and hackneyed. The reader must feel that he is in touch with a person rather than with an impersonal machine. Stereotyped forms, like "Yours of the 10th inst. received and in reply beg to advise," not only waste time and effort, but also destroy whatever force the thought might otherwise have had. The letter should be a man-to-man message and should express the personality of the writer in his own characteristic way.

23

Unity in the Letter

230. Unity of construction is as important as unity in thought. The letter must not only be concentrated on one main subject and idea; it must also reveal that singleness of purpose to the reader.

231. In routine letters it is helpful to state the subject at the head of the letter. This guards against straying from the point, and also assists in the proper handling and filing of letters.

232. In longer letters it is sometimes possible to repeat the main idea, or a word or two referring to it, so as to

insure its being kept uppermost in the reader's mind. Note how this is done in the following letter:

Dear Sir:

An official in a company that leads the world in its line, in explaining to us an advance in their business, said:

"We discharged the men who would not attempt the impracticable."

There is a big thought.

The most practical advances have come from men with impracticable aims.

The manufacturer or advertiser who does not constantly attempt the impracticable risks finding himself in a rut left behind by those who do.

One thing more than any other puts a method of procedure into disuse. It becomes too practicable; so practice-able that all are able to practice it—and do. It loses value because it loses individuality.

We try to keep this before us in our work.

In talking with advertisers we often stand up for the impracticable and the ideal, in the face of the most pronounced views.

We are sometimes fully conscious that what we advocate cannot be worked out by the route under discussion. The route is not important. The destination is. By insisting on the ideal we find an unexpected way out, often in the face of "practical" obstacles.

Yours very truly,

233. A good way to test the unity of a letter is to attempt to sum it up in one sentence. If this can be done, the letter is unified.

24

Order in the Letter

240. The character and purpose of the business letter are such that its ideas can best be presented in a certain definite order. This order, called for convenience the

"psychological order," begins with the reader's viewpoint and gradually leads to the writer's. The theoretically ideal letter begins with "you" and ends with "me." A close approximation to this is often found in actual practice. In any event, the early parts of the letter should deal with matters in which the reader is already interested; the latter parts may cover the ideas in which it is desired to interest him.

25

Connection in the Letter

250. In addition to logical order and close relationship of the ideas, the letter usually requires expressed connectives to bridge the gaps between them. These bridges should be as few and unobtrusive as possible.

251. Parallel construction is a valuable method of connecting ideas when the ideas have the same relation to the main thought of the letter.

> If a man should call on you and tell you that he could solve all your office problems—that he would guarantee to develop a higher degree of efficiency—show you a better system of handling detail—
>
> If he told you that he had many years of experience in the management of large office organizations—that he was now an officer in a large business-training institute, and was also a lecturer on office organization in one of the largest universities— . . .

252. Transitional paragraphs are sometimes inserted between two important ideas in the letter. This method is to be avoided wherever possible, especially in the short letter, because it tends to slow up progress.

> The quality of this typewriting machine is the same as that of the standard typewriting machine and I need not go into further

detail in regard to its construction, its easy-running properties, and its durability.

Since I have discussed the matter of the quality of the machine, I should also take up the matter of price, because you want to know not so much about the quality of the machine, but whether or not you are getting value for your money.

The price of the machine is $60. This, as you will note, is $40 less than the price of the standard machine. If you will . . .

253. Connection may be made by numbering the ideas. This device, although prescribed for military correspondence, is too mechanical for most business letters. Occasionally, however, it is useful in letters of argument and in letters summarizing a transaction.

254. The more common and useful method of connection is by transitional sentences. These should be short and should show the exact relationship between ideas.

In a similar way the banker in enlisting aid for his railway sets the imagination of his listeners at work upon a contrast between the monotonous present and the brilliant future of their town. When your listener is self-satisfied, talk his disadvantages, awaken his discontent, play upon his need.

Now, let us take this from another angle. A man may feel a need, yet have both well-grounded objections against your way of supplying it, and false objections or prejudices . . .

255. Conjunctions and conjunctive phrases are valuable because they are inconspicuous and do not greatly retard the speed of the letter. Among the more useful connectives of this sort are the following:

However, moreover, therefore, thus, notwithstanding this, that's why, on the other hand, of course, to be sure, on the contrary, now consider, for that reason, here's how, furthermore, for example, in view of this, in spite of this.

256. Repetition of important words is a useful method of connection. It serves the necessary purpose of bridging the gap without the necessity of introducing a word

for the purpose alone. The repetition also serves to emphasize the important fact that has already been made.

> May we inquire whether you have given consideration to our recent requests to consult you regarding the *interior decorating* contemplated for your new residence?
>
> As *interior decorating* is our specialty, we are prepared to supply what is required to make a home attractive. . . .

257. A letter should not depend upon a single kind of connective. Constant use of the same connective becomes as tiresome as the delivery of a speaker who begins every sentence with "Now."

26

Emphasis in the Letter

260. The beginning and ending of the letter are the most important places in the letter and should be occupied by important ideas forcefully expressed.

261. The beginning should not consist of the mere acknowledgment of the letter to which it is the reply. This acknowledgment may be essential, but it should be woven into the first sentence as a subordinate part of the reply.

> Bad: We have received your letter of February 10. The order to which it refers was shipped yesterday.
>
> Better: We are glad to assure you that the order referred to in your letter of February 10 was shipped yesterday.
>
> [Or]
>
> Before this letter reaches you, you will doubtless have received the order referred to in your letter of February 10. The order was shipped from our factory yesterday.

262. The beginning should not be taken up with aimless, perfunctory remarks concerning the handling of the letter. The facts that are obvious and are common to

all transactions are not important enough to deserve this prominence. They absorb the reader's attention at the point that is most vital and kill his interest in what follows. Too often they are characteristic of the perfunctory style that runs throughout the letter.

> Your letter of the 14th inst. has been received and contents duly noted. The matters referred to have been given our careful attention.

Better are such beginnings as the following:

> We are unable to give you the information you ask for in your letter of May 15 concerning the financial standing of John F. Andrews, who . . . _____
>
> Your order of October 10, we are sorry to say, has been delayed in shipment, but . . . _____
>
> Thank you for your letter of April 14 in which you call our attention to the mistakes made on our last invoice, our number 54,643 . . .

263. The acknowledgment of the letter can be handled by taking it out of the body of the letter and placing it above the inside address. This acknowledgment may read as follows:

> Replying to your letter of October 14.
> In reply to your letter of October 14.
> Answering Mr. Brown's letter of October 14.

264. The beginning should contain positive statements or assurances, if it is possible to give these. A negative at the beginning is likely to antagonize or offend the reader and to affect his whole impression of the letter.

> **Bad:** It is not our policy to make any refund on goods that have been used, but we hope to be able to adjust matters satisfactorily to you.
>
> **Better:** We are always glad to make adjustments satisfactory to our customers whenever goods for any reason fall short of meeting their expectations.

Bad: We are very sorry to receive your complaint regarding the goods you purchased . . .

Better: We are glad you wrote us so promptly concerning the goods you purchased . . .

265. The ending of the letter, since it makes the final impression on the reader and is likely to remain longest in his mind, should contain a forceful suggestion of the response expected from him.

Don't bother to write a letter; just mail your check to-day.

This offer may be withdrawn at any time; better get your order in now.

We shall give prompt attention to your further orders.

I shall be glad to have you appoint a time for a personal interview.

266. The ending of the letter should not consist of a vague, perfunctory phrase.

Bad: Hoping to hear from you soon,

Trusting to receive your further valued commands,

Inviting your further correspondence, we remain,

267. Participial phrases are particularly to be avoided in the ending, for the participial construction is one of the weakest constructions in the English language. Any idea that is important enough to come at the end of a letter is important enough to be expressed by a definite verb. Participial endings owe their origin to the desire to avoid abruptness, but abruptness may be avoided in better ways.

Bad: Trusting that this arrangement will prove satisfactory,
Better: We trust that you will find this arrangement satisfactory.

Bad: Hoping to be of service to you in this connection,
Better: May we be of service to you in this connection?

268. The ending of a letter should rarely be negative. Positive suggestion is much more likely to lead to response.

Bad: If you buy these books you will never regret it.

Better: These books will be a constant source of gratification to you.

Bad: We trust you will have no recurrence of this unfortunate experience.

Better: We shall make every effort to insure satisfactory service in your future transactions with us.

269. Special emphasis can be placed on a small but important point by taking it out of the body of the letter and putting it in a postscript. (P. S. is not needed as an introduction to it.)

Forms close July 10. All advertising copy must be received before midnight, July 9.

27

Emphasis by Proportion

270. Emphasis can often be given to an idea within the body of the letter by taking more words to express it. If the other ideas are stated as tersely as possible, the one that is elaborated fully will stand out prominently. Mere multiplication of words is, of course, valueless; but a description may be enriched by comparisons, and an argument may be strengthened by adding more evidence.

271. Repetition is a commonly useful method of emphasizing important words and phrases. It has its greatest value when the words bear directly upon the keynote idea or theme of the letter [see Rule 232]. The method is applicable, however, to any of the important contributing ideas.

Dear Sir:

If you are going to have a new suit this Fall, why not have a *new* one?

Not a Fall suit made last Spring, made according to what some one thought might be the style this Fall, and made for an imaginary man, but a Fall suit made this Fall, made according to the style Fifth Avenue has set for this Fall, and made to fit you personally.

There is a difference. Any one who sees it can sense the difference, though he may not be able to tell you what it is. At any rate, you want the difference to be in your favor. . . .

272. Avoid repetition of any word or phrase which should not be emphasized. The frequent repetition of *I* is an example of bad emphasis, for *I* should rarely be the dominating note of a letter. It is not to be avoided by merely omitting the word; the construction of the sentence should be changed.

Bad: I have had four years of experience in similar work. I feel sure I can satisfy your requirements, because I made a good record in my previous position.

Bad: Have had four years of experience in similar work. Feel sure of satisfying your requirements because of good record in previous positions.

Better: My four years' experience in similar work has developed my ability to a point where it should be capable of satisfying your requirements.

273. Emphasis on individual words or phrases may also be secured by mechanical means, such as the use of underlining, capitals, red ink, punctuation, spacing, and the like. [See Sections 86 and 87.]

28

The Tone of the Letter

280. The impression made by a letter is not due entirely to the meaning that is directly stated; it is often due largely to the suggestions that are indirectly aroused.

To these suggestions all the elements of the letter contribute—paragraphs, sentences, diction, even punctuation and mechanical display—as well as the thought itself [see Sections 18, 38, 48, 58, and 88]. The writer should determine the tone that is to be secured in his letter, taking into consideration suitability to the reader's character and mood, and should then make all elements work consistently toward that result. Usually the tone should be personal and friendly, but dignified.

281. Avoid an antagonistic tone. Such a tone is likely to be produced by the use of such words as *unreasonable*, *unjustifiable*, *claim*, *refuse*, *deny*, especially when combined in short sentences and paragraphs.

> We are surprised to receive your claim. It is entirely unreasonable, and we cannot allow it. We have done all our guarantee calls for, and fail to see why you expect more.

282. Avoid a suspicious tone. Overloading with conditional clauses, frequent reference to what the reader has asserted to be the case, and the use of such phrases as "according to your statement," "if, as you say," "have never had complaint about this before," "surprised that you report," etc., are among the things that—sometimes unintentionally—produce a suspicious tone.

> If the goods were damaged when received, as you claim they were, the damage must have occurred in transit.

283. Avoid a pompous, egotistical, or patronizing tone. Use of big words and long sentences, frequent repetition of *I* or *we*, or *our policy*, and general verboseness are likely to produce this impression.

> We shall have to say "nay" to your request for a little free publicity. Our policy is not to admit to our columns anything that is not of general interest to our readers. That is one reason why we have their absolute confidence.

284. Avoid a tone that is too humble and servile. Writers, in their commendable desire to preserve the "you" attitude, frequently fall into expressions that sound timid or cringing. Frequent use of "beg," "allow us," "may I not," and the like, or even the common forms of politeness, used to excess, will result in this tone.

> Your patronage is highly valued by our firm, and we should not for the world allow anything to disturb it. We beg to assure you that this mistake occurred through causes beyond our control, and trust that you will pardon us in this instance.

285. Avoid a flippant or "clever" tone, except in special cases where it is adapted to the character of the reader. Flippancy is a common fault of writers who desire to achieve humor, but it is seldom effective in business letters. Frequently it calls attention to itself, instead of to the subject that is being presented.

> Why not surprise your cerebrum and give your convolutions a treat?

286. Avoid a didactic, "preachy" tone. The average reader does not enjoy being lectured or dictated to, and resents the appearance of an attempt to force his decision. A continual succession of sentences with "you" as the subject will almost inevitably produce this effect.

> You are paying for it whether you have it or not. Every day you do without it you lose more than it would cost you. You will get it sooner or later. Make up your mind to have it sooner —to-day.

287. Avoid a sarcastic or ironical tone. Even in collection letters, where the writer is most often tempted to use this tone, it is likely to fail of its purpose, and, in addition, will almost surely lose the good-will of the reader. It is even worse in sales letters.

> When you sent for our booklet, "Savings," you must have been interested. Why haven't we heard from you? Perhaps you

thought there was some way to save money without earning it first.

288. Avoid an offensive, extravagant, or sensational tone, except under the most unusual conditions of adaptation to the reader. Continual use of superlatives and figures of speech, the piling up of vivid descriptive words, obvious flattery or sentimentality, all tend to produce this tone.

In this masterpiece the gifted author has reached the summit of his art. Here, as nowhere else in literature, he tears aside the veil that hides the secrets of humanity and reveals the uttermost passions of cupidity, love, revenge, and hatred. To the few who are capable of appreciating the best he will prove an inexhaustible source of wonder and delight.

289. Avoid a dull, colorless, lifeless tone. Use of abstract generalities, fitted together in complicated sentences, hackneyed phrases that have lost their meaning —these are some of the things that make a letter flat and unpalatable. A letter should be dignified, but it may still be interesting and vigorous. The verbs should be dynamic and the sentences short enough to help rapid movement.

It will prove a welcome addition to any library. Neither time nor money has been spared to make it the best of its kind. It will provide instruction and entertainment for young and for old and will while away many an idle hour. Any one of the volumes is alone worth the price of the entire set.

Compare with this: But neither time nor money is the proper word with which to picture the Five Foot Shelf. The real word is pleasure, self-satisfaction, the delight of mental growth. Shut your eyes for a moment and let these 418 friends take you by the hand, carry your imagination away with them. You will travel down the Nile with Herodotus; or around the Horn with Dana in "Two Years Before the Mast"; see the great Grecian dramas as in the Amphitheater of Athens; hear Cicero denounce Cataline in the Roman Senate; follow Cellini through the thrilling

intricacies of his dealings with Princes and Pontiffs; stand with Columbus on the *Santa Maria* as he sees the blue haze which is the new world; see Harvey as he discovers the circulation of the blood.

29

The Style of the Letter

290. Style is usually described as the individual impress a writer sets upon his productions. It is as intangible, as the quality of personality in a man, and, like personality, it is a most important factor in the impression. How much of it is due to natural characteristics and how much is developed by environment and experience cannot be determined. It should, however, be the aim of the business house to have its letters reflect the character and spirit of the institution.

291. The trite and hackneyed should be avoided. It is impossible to have individuality or personality in letters that are plentifully sprinkled with stilted phrases like "acknowledging same," "herewith enclosed," "pursuant to," and "advised accordingly."

292. The rhetorical and ornate should likewise be avoided. The writer need not limit himself narrowly to the language of every-day speech, but he will find it wise not to indulge in unusual expressions like "fortuitous occurrence," or "fomenting disturbance." Style does not result from the attempt to find unusual words; this attempt only leads to "straining for effect" and apparent insincerity.

293. The conversational vocabulary contains ample resources for almost any business message. The secret is to choose from it the words that express the meaning exactly.

294. Where the business house is long established and conservative, its style may properly be somewhat dignified. Colloquial expressions should be avoided.

> There are certain distinctions recognized by men of culture and refinement that, however finely drawn in the beginning, have, through long usage, become arbitrary. For instance, no man would think of wearing other than white linen with his evening clothes. With stationery, men have invariably left the papers of soft texture, the tinted papers, and the linen or fabric finished papers to the use of the ladies. And the distinction here is not without foundation, for such papers are effeminate.

295. Where a house is young and progressive and deals in merchandise that has a popular appeal, its style may be colloquial—even slangy, in some instances.

> You can't do very much with 2 cents nowadays, especially in some directions. In these times of excessively high prices it wouldn't buy much food, but 2 cents spent in a certain way will do more than you realize.

296. Frequently a writer's style crystallizes too early into a settled habit of using the same type of sentence structure or the same limited vocabulary throughout all his work. It is desirable to cultivate the ability to use a variety of sentence forms and a wide range of diction. Without such ability, individuality of style is likely to mean narrowness.

297. The style of a house is often patterned after the style of the individual who controls its policies. In all cases he should see that the style of all the correspondents is reasonably consistent with his and that all the letters that go out on the firm's letterheads meet a definite standard. This standardization of letters, the silent representatives of the house, will do much toward establishing a definite conception of its character in the minds of all those who deal with it.

Chapter III

The Paragraph

30

Functions of the Paragraph

300. The paragraph is the largest subdivision of a message and is usually composed of a group of related sentences developing a single phase of the subject. It is designed to make the task of reading easier by affording resting-places for the eye and mind. Thus it has a display function and a structural function.

301. The original function of the paragraph was that of display. The printer, finding a solid mass of type formidable and unattractive, broke it up arbitrarily; first, by inserting paragraph marks (¶,¶); later, by indenting the first line. Recently, separation by white space between lines has come into general use as a method of indicating paragraphs. This method is particularly favored in business letters and advertisements.

302. Paragraphing arbitrarily to make the page more attractive is better than no paragraphing. To be of greatest value, however, the divisions of the reading-matter should correspond with the natural divisions of thought. The eye should be brought to rest momentarily at a point where the mind needs to rest; that is, just after

one topic of the message has been received and another is about to be begun. Structural paragraphing economizes the reader's attention.

303. In literary composition this structural aspect of paragraphing holds precedence, sometimes to the extent of sacrificing display possibilities. Paragraphs rarely contain fewer than three or four sentences, or fifty words, and paragraphs of over three hundred words are not uncommon.

304. In business English the original purpose of display receives more consideration. Paragraphs are much shorter, on the average; sometimes the business English paragraph contains but a single sentence.

305. Even in business English, paragraphing should be done with regard for both functions. Every letter or other business message is capable of logical subdivision into topics. The question for the writer to decide is as to the degree of subdivision and the consequent number of topics.

306. Paragraphing is a matter of judgment, rather than of exact rule. The judgment should be that of the writer, not that of the stenographer or typist. In dictating, it is always wise to indicate the paragraphing.

31

Paragraph Length

310. The character of the paragraphs in any business message should be adapted to the reader or group addressed, and the effect it is desired to produce on them. This principle applies particularly to the determination

of the length of paragraphs. A letter composed of short paragraphs has a very different effect from the same material in long paragraphs.

311. Short paragraphs are more inviting to the eye and reveal the meaning more quickly than long ones. They are more brisk and stimulative. They are less weighty. Note the contrast of the following passages:

> Unknown a year ago, the Essex has set a world's sales record.
>
> It has established a distinct new type among the fine cars of motordom. To-day, more than 20,000 are in service.
>
> Yet there is no secret back of the Essex triumph.

> Unknown a year ago, the Essex has set a world's sales record. It has established a distinct new type among the fine cars of motordom. To-day, more than 20,000 are in service. Yet there is no secret back of the Essex triumph.

312. Since business English considers first of all the convenience of the reader, it is natural that the tendency should be toward short paragraphs. This tendency is further helped by the fact that most business messages are themselves short. Hence the short paragraph does not produce a monotonous, jerky effect, as it might in a long communication.

313. Short paragraphs are especially valuable in writing to an individual or group of limited education and intelligence. It is preferred in advertisements that attempt to reach the mass of people.

314. If a long advertisement or other message is written in very short paragraphs—especially single-sentence paragraphs—it should be divided by subheads or other mechanical means into sections of convenient length.

Unknown a year ago, the Essex has set a world's sales record.

It has established a distinct new type among the fine cars of motordom. To-day, more than 20,000 are in service.

Yet there is no secret back of the Essex.

IT WON ON QUALITY
MINUS USELESS WEIGHT

It made the issue on finest car qualities without useless weight or size.

That issue is uppermost to-day. For nimbleness, convenience in crowded traffic, and economy of upkeep and operation are more important now than ever.

And with the Essex you sacrifice no pleasure, comfort, or performance ability that the large, high-priced car can give. Judge it by trial. Match its speed, power, and riding ease with any.

Then answer if Essex has not proved great size and weight needless to fine car quality.

315. Long paragraphs are suitable in business messages to educated and conservative people.

316. Short paragraphs are suitable for messages in which getting attention and stimulating action are important objects. Sales letters almost invariably should have short paragraphs at the beginning.

A flicker, a flash, and the high-pitched hum of your generators ceases.

That means trouble.

You know what happens then, because you have been through the same thing before. There is the hustling around, the finding of the "trouble," the imperative demand for speed in repair, because you must get the power . . .

317. Long paragraphs are suitable for messages that attempt to conciliate, persuade, or convince. They should almost invariably be used in adjusting complaints and in any other message that is to be read by a person in an angry or antagonistic mood.

We were glad to receive your letter of March 8, in which you informed us that the table sent you on February 25 was not received in perfect condition, because it gives us this opportunity of assuring you that everything will be made just as you want it. Although our records show that the table was all right in every respect when it went from our Inspection Department, nevertheless, under no circumstances would we want you to keep anything from our house that was not just right.

318. Short paragraphs are suitable in a vivid, vigorous appeal.

The Pictorial Section of *The New York Times* is the woman's supplement of the best Sunday newspaper in America. It is read from cover to cover.

What the Pictorial Section has done—is doing—for others, it can do for you—

If you give it an opportunity.

319. Long paragraphs are suitable in a formal letter or report.

On behalf of the Government of the State of Sao Paulo, tenders of all or any part of $350,000 of these bonds at prices below par and interest are invited. All tenders should be in writing, and be sent to the office of the Federal City Bank of Brooklyn. These tenders should clearly indicate the amount offered, the price expressed on an "and interest" basis, and include an agreement to deliver bonds accepted on tenders to the Federal City Bank of Brooklyn within five days from the advice of the acceptance of such tenders against payment in New York funds.

32

Essentials of a Good Paragraph

320. Good paragraphing is rarely secured by writing the message and then separating it into paragraphs afterward. Paragraphs should be planned in advance.

321. The paragraph may be considered as a complete composition in miniature. It should have the power to stand alone. In the case of a message composed entirely of very short paragraphs and divided into sections, each section may be considered as a paragraph from the standpoint of construction.

322. Each paragraph should have the qualities of clearness, correctness, conciseness, courtesy, and character.

33

Unity in the Paragraph

330. The paragraph should be a unit. It should mark a complete and definite step forward in the progress of the thought. Unless it does this it loses one of its chief reasons for existence.

331. The paragraph should be concentrated upon one idea. Every sentence in the paragraph should directly aid in developing this idea. If a sentence does not pertain immediately to the main idea it does not belong in the paragraph.

332. Ideas not essential to the main idea of a paragraph and not important enough to deserve a separate paragraph, should be omitted.

> You will not be able to obtain the goods any sooner by canceling your order with us and placing it elsewhere. Other manufacturers are likewise oversold. *We should have filled your order before this but for the fact that we have been delayed by strikes.* If you leave the order with us, it will be reached within a week or two, whereas if you send a new order to a manufacturer it will take its place at the foot of the list and may not be filled for months. [The italicized sentence is obviously irrelevant to the point under discussion and should be omitted or woven into a new paragraph explaining the reasons for the delay.]

333. Ideas that are essential to the main thought of a paragraph should ordinarily be included in that paragraph. The only exception is that a sentence or two that logically belongs in a paragraph, as illustration or summary of its idea, may be separately paragraphed for greater emphasis.

> Duracord is different. It can be battered and pounded and abused, and stands up as no other cord will.
>
> In laboratory tests it resisted the pounding of heavy hammers, twenty times longer than ordinary braided cord. It stood fifteen times the abrasion of ordinary cord.
>
> [NOTE.—This paragraphing is permissible, but the better practice is to combine the two paragraphs into one.]

334. The unity of a paragraph can be tested by summing up its ideas in a single sentence, or "topic sentence." If this cannot be done, or if any sentence in the paragraph is not covered by the topic sentence, then the paragraph is not a unit.

335. The topic sentence may not appear as an actual sentence in the paragraph. It often does, however, especially in business messages. Its position is usually at the beginning or at the end.

> *Neither do I advocate a study of abstract principles that bear no relation to practical experience.* I have lived long enough to appreciate the value of experience and the futility of pure abstractions. The only principles on which I would stake a penny's worth of time or money are those that are based directly on experience—not necessarily on my own experience, however, but on the experience of others as well. Such principles are in reality simply condensed experience.

> The lawyer may know how to get money, but his way of getting it is like killing the bees to get the honey. The lawyer—with all due respect to his professional skill—is not a painless operator when it comes to extracting money from delinquent debtors.

Flourishing the lash of the law, he makes his demand for payment in cold, unfeeling terms which are sure to arouse antagonism. The element of salesmanship has no place in his method of making collections. *Legal measures, therefore, to enforce payment should be taken only as a last resort.*

336. In many cases the functions that a letter must perform determine the paragraphing of the letter. A letter answering a complaint, for example, should perform four functions, in the order given: (1) impress the reader with the belief in your sincerity and good-will; (2) show the causes of the trouble and the facts in the case; (3) state what you are going to do about the complaint, what you have done, and what you wish the complainant to do; (4) convince the complainant that it is still to his advantage to do business with you.

337. A letter answering a complaint, therefore, will have at least four paragraphs; *i. e.*, one paragraph for each function or each new idea. The writer may find that several paragraphs may be needed to give the causes of the trouble. In that case each of the several paragraphs should make a complete step in the progress of the message.

NOTE.—The following letter was sent in answer to a letter of complaint stating that unless shipments were made on time the business of the complainant would cease:

Conciliates	We thank you for your candid letter of July 15, in which you called our attention to the fact that you have not received the goods ordered by you on June 20. Allow us to express our regret also for any inconvenience caused you by the non-arrival of the shipment.
States the facts in the case	We have gone over our records and have found that your order left the shipping department on June 23. According to our schedule these goods should have been received by you by July 7 at

the very latest. It occasionally happens that the railroad misplaces or unnecessarily delays shipments, and this has probably happened with your order.

Tells what has been done — Already we have started a tracer to find out what the trouble is, but if we cannot locate the goods within the next four days we shall send you a duplicate shipment.

A bid for continuation of business — We are extremely sorry that there has been this delay, but it is one of those cases that are out of our hands. We know that you will understand that it is not the fault of our house, but that of the railroad company. We shall do everything in our power to see that you receive prompt delivery of your future orders.

338. Another example of paragraphing determined by functions to be performed is the sales letter. The functions of a sales letter are: (1) to attract attention; (2) to create desire; (3) to convince; (4) to stimulate action. Each function should have at least one paragraph. It will often be necessary to devote several paragraphs to the developing of one function.

Attracts attention — Doctor Steinmetz, up at the General Electric Company at Schenectady, is a better electrician than a politician, although he did run on the Socialist ticket in this last election.

Creates desire — Like Steinmetz, I am a better man at one thing than I am at all others. That one thing is the installing of electrical machinery and the doctoring of it when it is sick.

Creates desire — You, of course, are interested in making profits, and the best way to get increased profits is by cutting down expenses. An item of expense that you have to meet is that of repairs to electrical apparatus—whether the electrical machinery of a large power plant or merely the wiring of a building for bells or lights.

Convinces Time and again has my organization been tested on instalment and repair problems of the most complex character, and time and again it has shown its ability to handle the problem with the maximum of efficiency. The experience that I have gained in this specific work during the past fourteen years I now offer to you. It has been successful experience, too, for, should you want evidence concerning my past achievements, I can give you the names of my clients. They will answer your questions, because they are satisfied with my work.

Stimulates action Call me up personally at 112 S, Jersey City, or mail the inclosed card.

339. Paragraph each speech of a conversation.

Wrong: The history of this disagreement is as follows: I wrote, "Will you take $1.02 a bushel?" "Must have $1.02½," he telegraphed. "I will take it at $1.02½," I replied.

Right: The history of this disagreement is as follows:
I wrote, "Will you take $1.02 a bushel?"
"Must have $1.02½," he telegraphed.
"I will take it at $1.02½," I replied.

34

Order in the Paragraph

340. The sentences which compose the paragraph should be arranged in some logical order so that progress from the beginning to the end of its thought shall be smooth and easy for the reader. There are few greater hindrances to prompt comprehension than haphazard sequence of ideas.

341. The narrative, or chronological, order presents a series of events in the order of their occurrence.

Bad: Here are the facts as we have them on our records. We notified you on September 8 about the possible delay in shipment. We received your order on September 5 for goods embraced in our new line, which was not promised until early in October. The notification probably went astray, since you did not get it. The bill of lading was mailed on October 15 and the goods were sent October 13.

Good: Here are the facts as we have them on our records. We received your order on September 5 for goods embraced in our new line, which was not promised until early in October. We notified you on September 8 about the possible delay. The notification probably went astray, since you did not get it. The goods were sent on October 13 and the bill of lading was mailed on October 15.

342. The descriptive order gives the general aspects first and then fills in the details as they might have been perceived by the eye, ear, or other sense of the observer.

Emerging at the Third Floor from the elevator on the Madison Avenue side of the store, one finds oneself directly in the spacious, well arranged and equipped Fur Department. The rich tones of the handsome furs displayed on forms and in show-cases present an artistic contrast with the soft Quaker gray of the carpet and woodwork. This department not improperly may be termed the most attractive—as it has also been quoted as the most extensive—retail fur department in America.

343. The deductive order begins with a general claim or conclusion and follows with details, illustrations, or proofs. It may state the effect and then the cause.

Bosch Plugs are right and act right. Proof of this fact is in the showing made by Bosch Products in the recent Vanderbilt Cup and Grand Prize Races. Both winners and EVERY car to finish used Bosch Plugs; also the Bosch Magneto. This was a grueling test—more heat was present, more oil was used, and greater speed was evident than you ever would require—but Bosch Plugs stood it.

The Republic Grande lasts longer. The endurance of its cord construction is remarkable. It is very much stronger in the side

walls, where greater strength is needed. Its tread—ribbed or staggered—is our own Prodium rubber, which wears down smoothly and evenly like toughened steel.

344. The inductive order gives specific and concrete facts first and ends with a general statement or conclusion drawn from them. It may state the cause and then the effect.

Nearly two million women use the Hoosier every day. These careful housekeepers save many steps each day. And when *you* are ready—and you will be some time—the Hoosier will save work for you.

345. The climactic order in the paragraph places facts and statements in the order of their importance, with the most important last. This arrangement secures emphasis.

This newspaper purposes to lead. And it will lead because it will live. It will lead because it will ever be a better newspaper. It will lead because it will always have something useful to do for an army of men and women who are ever growing and ever advancing their ideas.

346. The amplifying paragraph is a paragraph which develops a point brought out in a previous paragraph.

. . . There are, accordingly, these three reasons why the dealer wants charge customers: (1) Charge customers buy more goods; (2) Charge customers buy higher-priced goods; (3) Charge customers stick to the store.

The first of the three reasons why the retailer desires to have charge customers is that the charge customers buy more goods. This means that in many cases a customer would not buy articles for sale because he has not enough money with him at the time, or because he thinks he is spending too much money. If he were a charge customer he would merely say "Charge it," and would not realize how much he was buying.

347. The contrast order takes, in turn, the positive and negative views of a point and balances one against the other.

35

Connection in the Paragraph

350. Besides being in logical order, the sentences of a paragraph should be so constructed and connected as to avoid any breaks in the continuity of the thought. No matter how closely related the ideas are, there are sure to be gaps between them that must be bridged in order to make comprehension easy and rapid.

351. The same subject and point of view should be maintained, if possible, throughout the paragraph. Unnecessary changes are confusing.

Bad: Fill out and mail the inclosed post-card and a 50-lb. sample order at the regular cash price will be shipped to you. It should be given a thorough test and if it is not found to be the best value you ever had, there will be no charge.

Better: Fill out and mail the inclosed post-card and you will receive a 50-lb. sample order at the regular cash price. Give it a thorough test and if you do not find it to be the best value you ever had you will not be charged a cent.

NOTE.—The point of view or subject may be changed for contrast or emphasis.

352. Two or more sentences that have the same logical relation to the main idea should be arranged in similar form.

The Goodyear No-Rim-Cut Tires excel all other tires in at least four ways. They save the countless blowouts due to wrinkled fabric. They absolutely prevent rim-cutting. They combat loose treads and lessen the risk by sixty per cent. They have the all-weather-tread—tough, double thick, and enduring.

353. The members of a sentence should be so arranged as to form close connection with the preceding sentence.

Poor connection: You will find on investigation that a large number of the principal contractors now own their own diving apparatus and use their own men for such diving as they have to do. The expense and loss of time due to securing a regular diver is thus saved.

Better connection: You will find on investigation that a large number of the principal contractors now own their own diving apparatus and use their own men for such diving as they may have to do. *This* practice saves the expense and loss of time due to securing a regular diver.

Poor connection: Our confidence in the system and in your ability to appreciate its merits when fairly tested is so great that we are willing to bear all this risk and expense. If the outfit were not in every way worthy of the high indorsement it has received we could not do *this*.

Better connection: Our confidence in the system and in your ability to appreciate its merits when fairly tested is so great that we are willing to bear all this risk and expense. *This* we could not do if the outfit were not in every way worthy of the high indorsement it has received.

Poor connection: In one type of system, the dynamo or generator and the starting motor are combined in a single unit. These units are separate and work independently in the Gray & Davis Starting-Lighting System.

Better connection: *In one type of system,* the dynamo or generator and the starting motor are combined in a single unit. *In the Gray & Davis* Starting-Lighting System, these units are separate and work independently.

354. Connection between a series of parallel ideas (such as advantages of an article, reasons for buying, or the like) may be made by the use of numerals, as *first, second, third,* etc. This method is particularly useful in a paragraph of summary.

355. Conjunctions are the most common form of connectives. The conjunction chosen to link sentences together should be the one that expresses exactly the relationship between them. *And* and *but* are loose connectives; preference should be given to the more specific

moreover, besides, in addition, hence, therefore, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, and the like. These connectives also have the advantage that they can be put within the sentence where they will be less conspicuous.

> Our orders at first will be tentative. In a very short time, *however,* we shall be in a position to gauge the demand and frame our orders accordingly.

356. Connection between sentences can often be shown by demonstratives (*this, that,* etc.) or personal pronouns (*he, it, they,* etc.).

> As a solution of the problem of foul air, we suggest our electric suction fan. It will draw out the foul air and allow fresh air to take its place. This fan can be installed in any window or partition and operated for three and one-half cents an hour.

357. Repetition of words often serves to link sentences together. The words repeated should be important ones, and the repetitions should be close together. Repetition of a word that was used a few lines before is likely to be more harmful than helpful.

> In fairness to our customers we must advise them that we believe prices next fall will be still higher. Higher prices are unpleasant. The only thing worse than continually higher prices is continually lower ones.

358. A too liberal use of connectives is to be avoided, because it slows up reading. Narrative, in particular, requires few expressed connectives—none at all, if the events are closely connected in time or by other relationship.

36

Position Emphasis in the Paragraph

360. The component parts of a paragraph vary in importance; hence they should receive varying degrees

of emphasis. The ideas of greatest importance should occupy the positions of greatest prominence, the beginning and end. (This explains why the topic sentence, if it appears at all, is usually in one or the other of these positions. See Rule 335.)

361. The beginning of the paragraph may need to contain material connecting with the preceding paragraph, but it is usually unwise to devote the whole of the first sentence to this purpose. It should lead forward to the subject of the paragraph in which it appears.

Bad: We have shown you that this car will do all that any car can do. But this is not enough. You want to know that it will continue to do it day in and day out, year after year.

Better: It is not enough to know that the car will do all that any car can do; you want to know also that it will continue to do it day in and day out, year after year.

362. The final sentence of the paragraph should invariably contain an important idea, forcefully expressed.

Monel metal is a natural alloy of nickel and copper. It is as strong as steel, non-corrodible as bronze, more durable than either. It takes and retains a perfect nickel finish. Wherever Monel is used wear is largely reduced and corrosion prevented.

37

Proportion in the Paragraph

370. The ideas in a paragraph should, so far as possible, occupy space commensurate with their importance. A minor idea should rarely be developed in a relatively long sentence. Conversely, the major idea may take a long sentence or more than one sentence.

371. In the climactic paragraphs the sentences should increase in length, as in importance, from the beginning to the end. [See Rule 345.]

372. A very short sentence at the end of a paragraph frequently secures emphasis. This sentence is usually a summary sentence.

> Don't hesitate to make definite arrangements for this service on account of any distance consideration. A large number of clients come a long distance for Royal Service. They find it worth their while. So will you.

373. Repetition of a word, phrase, or clause in a paragraph tends to give it more space and thus emphasize it.

> As a business man, your decision to invest in some particular truck naturally will be based on the experience of other users. The 60,000 Republic Trucks now in service represent the greatest truck preference in the world. It stands to reason that this preference could not be founded on anything but the most satisfactory experience recorded by the owners of any motor truck. [Note the repetition of "preference" and "experience."]

38

Tone of Paragraphs

380. The various types of paragraphs—as to length, order, etc.—that have been defined and illustrated here offer a wide range of choice for the writer of business English messages. By his selection and planning he can influence the tone of his message almost as much as by the choice of words.

381. The paragraphing should always be suitable to the kind of message. The long booklet that tells the history of a business could scarcely be written in the short deductive paragraphs that might properly compose a newspaper advertisement.

382. The paragraphing should be suitable to the character of the house or article represented. The terse, contrast paragraphs that invite the reader to insist upon a certain brand of breakfast food might appear undignified in the announcements of a bank.

383. The paragraphing should be reasonably consistent in length and method. It is distracting to read a message varying from single-sentence paragraphs to long ones with no compelling reason for the changes.

384. The paragraphing should have enough variety to avoid a monotonous effect. Violent changes are undesirable, except when great emphasis is desired, but the paragraphs should not appear to have been cast in a single mold.

39

Form Paragraphs

390. In order to save time and expense in handling routine correspondence many business houses use form paragraphs. Each of these paragraphs deals with a single situation or phase of a situation that arises frequently in the relations of the house with the customer, such as delays, damage, shortage, and the like. The paragraphs are numbered and indexed, so that when a letter is to be answered the proper combination can be picked out and copied. Sometimes the entire letter can be made up of these form paragraphs; more frequently they can be used for a large part of the letter and the remainder personally dictated. When the letter is sent out, however, there is nothing to distinguish the dictated paragraphs from the form paragraphs, and the reader accepts the whole as a personal communication.

391. Form paragraphs have the advantage of minimizing the deficiencies of the average correspondent and enabling the house to send out a larger percentage of letters that represent the best brains in its employ. They also permit better standardization of the correspondence and greater uniformity of style.

392. The form paragraphs are usually selected from letters that have been used in the past and that represent an effective handling of a typical situation. Sometimes they are written by an expert correspondent expressly for the manual. It is well to have several alternative paragraphs covering a given point.

393. The principle of unity has a practical use in form paragraphs, for, unless each paragraph deals with but one point, it cannot be combined easily with other paragraphs. The form paragraph reaches the maximum of efficiency only when it is a unit—only when it is complete in itself.

394. If the form paragraph manual has been properly compiled and is used with discretion, it results in better individual letters than those dictated on the spur of the moment by an inexperienced correspondent. It also affords the head correspondent or correspondence supervisor a convenient method of gradually improving the general standard of the letters because he can easily revise the paragraphs in use at any time.

395. After a little practice the correspondents will remember by its number the exact paragraph they want. Then they can make up the answers to letters by jotting down on the letters the numbers of the paragraphs with any "fill-in" data. An example of this is:

6.....$49—March 2
25..
42.....$50

The stenographer consults her book of form paragraphs and copies those paragraphs which have been numbered on the letters, at the same time filling in the facts given. The result is the following letter:

> Thank you for your check for $49 tendered us in payment of our invoice of March 2.
>
> Upon comparing the amount of your check with the amount of our invoice, we find that you have deducted a discount of 2%. This deduction was probably caused by an oversight on the part of your bookkeeper, for our terms, as you know, allow 2% discount for payment within 10 days. As payment was made after the discount period had elapsed, we are unable to allow the discount of 2%.
>
> We know that when this matter is called to your attention you will see the fairness of our position. We are therefore returning your check and request that you will be so good as to send us by return mail your corrected check for $50

396. Form paragraphs represent the highest development in the art of paragraphing business English messages. Only one who has attempted to compile a form-paragraph manual can fully realize how rare good paragraphs are and how important it is to observe the principles set forth in this chapter.

Chapter IV

The Sentence

40

Sentence-making

400. Success in the writing of business messages depends in large degree upon the ability to write clear-cut, effective sentences. Without that ability the writer will fail to achieve the primary purpose of a message—*i. e.*, to convey thoughts in such a manner that the reader easily understands them.

401. The sentence is the basic unit of expression. Whenever we wish to convey a thought to another person, whether by spoken or written speech, we use the sentence. We cannot so much as resolve to telephone to a customer without forecasting it to ourselves in some sentence form. In making up our minds to take such an action we say to ourselves, "We ought to telephone to Anderson." As sentences, then, are the basic units of thought, the effectiveness of our messages depends upon our skill in constructing them.

402. A sentence may be defined as the expression of a complete thought by means of words that are united grammatically. Consider this group of words: "Circulation exceeding 350,000 copies." This is not a sentence despite the fact that it begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, for it contains no complete thought. Not

until we have a subject and a predicate can we express a complete thought—*e. g.*, "The circulation of *The New York Times* exceeds 350,000 copies." A sentence, therefore, must have a subject [that about which something is asserted] and a predicate [that which makes the definite assertion]. In the example given above, the subject is "The circulation of *The New York Times*"; the predicate is "exceeds 350,000 copies." [But see Rule 420, note.]

403. The statement that a sentence is the expression of a complete thought implies that the structure of a sentence is in large measure determined in advance. Failure to have decided in your mind precisely what you wanted to say, or failure to have determined just how you wanted to say it, results in sentences that convey blurred and weak thoughts.

404. The ability to write effective sentences may be developed by a study of the principles of sentence structure, by practice, and by revision. The important principles of sentence structure are presented to you in this chapter; the practice and revision can be secured from your every-day writing or dictating. Concerning revision, however, more should be said.

405. After you have your completed work before you, go over it carefully to see whether the sentences need correction or improvement to make the thought clear and forceful.

406. Revision of *dictated* material is especially necessary because, unlike a writer, a dictator can seldom tell whether his sentences are correct in structure until after the entire message has been completed, typed, and placed before him. The necessity for revision is constant. Even experienced writers sometimes find that their sentences show certain habitual faults, as, for instance, the

frequent use of the participle in the absolute construction [see Rule 467], the failure to use parallel construction [see Rule 450], or the use of long, involved sentences—a common fault in business letters. If nothing more, there is often a lack of flexibility—a failure to make use of appropriate sentence forms. The writer who has not mastered the possibilities of the various sentence forms is as much handicapped as he whose vocabulary contains only a few hundred words.

41

Sentence Length

410. Sentence length in business messages demands consideration because, in order that the best results may be secured, the sentence length should be arbitrarily adapted to the reader, to the purpose of the message, and to the character of the house from which the message comes.

411. As a general rule, sentences in business letters and advertisements should be short, because short sentences are more quickly and more easily understood than long sentences. A sentence containing not more than fifteen words is called a short sentence.

412. Short, incisive sentences convey the feeling of energy and force better than do long sentences. In forceful letters, the short sentence will be found to predominate. In sales letters and in advertisements, the purpose of which is to incite the reader to action, the short sentence helps the purpose of the message by impressing the thoughts on the reader in an action-inciting manner. Quick, energetic speech hastens action. Read and com-

pare the following two examples of the endings of a sales letter:

As there are only 257 sets of these books left, you must order now if you want to be sure of getting your set. You will find an order blank inclosed, on which we wish you would write your name and address, and mail—now!

Yours truly,

Shorter Sentence Length

Only 257 sets of these books are left. To be sure of getting your set, you must order now. Inclosed is an order blank. Merely write your name and address on it. Then mail it—now!

Yours truly,

413. Since short sentences are easier to read and more attractive than long sentences, use short sentences at the beginning of a sales letter or advertisement. Read and compare the two examples of the beginnings of a sales letter that follow:

Dear Sir:

Two years ago this spring when I was down in your section of the state and was stopping at Lowe's in Brownsville, I ran across Peter Tift of that town, who told me that he was disgusted with that country, because, although he had been working hard trying to raise tobacco, he was just pulling through, and no more. . . .

Shorter Sentence Length

Dear Sir:

Two years ago this spring I was down in your section of the state and was stopping at Lowe's in Brownsville.

While there, I ran across Peter Tift of that town. He told me that he was disgusted with that country. He said that, although he had been working hard trying to raise tobacco, he was just pulling through, and no more. . . .

414. Many business letters contain exceedingly long sentences because the dictator, in dictating, is easily led from one idea to another until he has strung together

several different ideas. You can avoid making it difficult for your reader to get the meaning of your sentence by consciously striving to keep your sentences short.

415. In adapting the length of your sentences to your reader, bear in mind such general rules as the following: Short sentences should predominate in most letters to business men, to farmers, and to readers who are obviously lacking in education. Long sentences may be used in letters to women, because of the polish and smoothness they impart to the letter. Long sentences may be used, for the same reason, in letters to professional people, to conservative people, and, in general, to educated people.

416. In adapting the length of your sentences to the purpose of your message, bear in mind such general rules as the following: Short sentences should predominate in sales letters, collection letters, and, in general, in letters the purpose of which is to arouse the reader to action. Long sentences should predominate in answers to complaints, letters refusing credit, and, in general, in letters the purpose of which is to conciliate the reader, or in which especial care must be taken not to offend or irritate.

417. In adapting the length of your sentences to the character of your house, bear in mind the following general rule: Long sentences give the impression of dignity and conservativeness. Such houses as banks, high-class jewelry houses, and bond houses find long sentences helpful in imparting the proper character or style to their letters.

418. The continual use of short sentences or long sentences in messages of any considerable length will cause monotony. Hence, do not overdo the use of either.

42

Clearness and Consistency in Sentences

420. Clearness requires that no parts necessary to complete the thought be omitted from the sentence. The fault of omitting words is common in business writing. It usually arises from haste in dictating, or from a mistaken attempt to secure conciseness. The result of these omissions is that the reader can less easily understand the writer's meaning. Moreover, even though lack of clearness does not result from the omissions, the omission of words is not good form.

NOTE.—Space in advertisements and sales letters is often so valuable that fragmentary sentences are used. This practice is perfectly legitimate provided the reader can readily supply the missing words.

421. Do not omit the articles *a*, *an*, and *the* if they are necessary to an immediate understanding of the sentence.

Faulty: In the package, we found *a* broken and ∧ unbroken bottle.

Better: In the package, we found *a* broken and *an* unbroken bottle.

Faulty: *The* Greek and ∧ Italian laborers were told to elect separate committees.

Better: *The* Greek and *the* Italian laborers were told to elect separate committees.

NOTE 1.—Compare the difference in meaning in the following two sentences:

The owner and manager went to Boston. [Only one man is indicated; he is both owner and manager.]

The owner and the manager went to Boston. [Two men are indicated; one is the owner, and the other is the manager.]

NOTE 2.—Some writers use a sort of telegraphic style of writing. This practice sometimes makes the letter appear curt.

Bad: ∧ Have sent ∧ bill and ∧ goods to ∧ home address of ∧ customer.

Better: *We* have sent *the* bill and *the* goods to *the* home address of *your* customer.

422. Do not omit any preposition that is necessary to the completeness of the sense.

Bad: He seemed to have a great interest ∧ and a sound knowledge *of* the railroad situation.

Better: He seemed to have a great interest *in* and a sound knowledge *of* the railroad situation.

Bad: He is a manufacturer ∧ and dealer *in* lamps.

Better: He is a manufacturer *of* and dealer *in* lamps.

Bad: This office has no connection ∧ or knowledge *of* the house you mentioned.

Better: This office has no connection *with* or knowledge *of* the house you mentioned.

Still better: This office has no connection *with* the house you mentioned and no knowledge *of* it.

423. Do not omit an adjective or an adverb unless the sense permits.

Bad: He asked me to invite to the luncheon *his* former and ∧ present advertising manager.

Better: He asked me to invite to the luncheon *his* former and *his* present advertising manager.

NOTE.—Improper omission is frequently made when *very* or *too* is used with past participles that are not also recognized as adjectives, as:

Bad: I was *very impressed* by his manner.

Better: I was *very much impressed* by his manner.

424. Two incomplete members of a sentence, one requiring a singular noun to complete it, and the other a plural noun, should not both be completed by one noun unless that noun immediately follows the incomplete member standing first in the sentence.

Bad: This bond is one of the *safest* ∧, if not the *safest bond* for the investor.

Better: This bond is one of the *safest bonds* for the investor, if not the *safest*.

Bad: Consent must be given by the Public Service Commission to *this* ∧ and to all *future issues*.

Better: Consent must be given by the Public Service Commission to *this issue* and to all *future issues*.

425. Do not omit a necessary verb or part of a verb.

Bad: As you requested, the stock certificate *was* registered and the bonds ∧ sent.

Better: As you requested, the stock certificate *was* registered and the bonds *were* sent.

Bad: The letter never *has* ∧ and never *will be* sent.

Better: The letter never *has been* and never *will be* sent.

426. Words necessary to complete a comparison should not be omitted.

Bad: The price is *as good* if not *better than* any other you can get.

Better: This price is *as good as* any other you can get, if not *better*.

Bad: Our twenty-pound paper is *cheaper* and just *as* good as Amco.

Good: Our twenty-pound paper is *cheaper than* Amco and just *as* good.

Ambiguous: I like the new boss much more than Harry.

Good: I like the new boss much more than Harry *does*. [Or,]

Good: I like the new boss much more than I do Harry.

NOTE.—An object must be compared with *any other*

object of its own class, and with *any* object of a class not its own. Hence, after comparatives accompanied by *than*, the words *any* and *all* should be followed by *other* or *else*, except when the comparison is between an object of one class and an object of a different class.

Wrong: This tobacco is better than *any*.
[The construction used here is illogical because it means that the tobacco mentioned is better than itself.]
Right: This tobacco is better than *any other*.

Wrong: We would rather do business with you than with any one ∧.
Right: We would rather do business with you than with any one *else*.

Correct: Our new hat, model No. 1463, is better-looking than *any* one shown in your catalog.

427. Comparisons must be completed consistently.

Wrong: The power of this motor is equal to the famous Liberty motor.
Right: The power of this motor is equal to that of the famous Liberty motor.

Wrong: The cost of these made-to-order clothes is less than clothes you buy at a store.
Right: The cost of these made-to-order clothes is less than the cost of clothes you buy at a store.

Wrong: This method is more efficient than any method.
Right: This method is more efficient than any other method.

428. In many instances it is necessary to restrict the use of *any* and *all* by *other* and *else*.

Wrong: A pleasant feature of these straw hats, not to be found in *any* ∧ make, is the transparent lining.
Right: A pleasant feature of these straw hats, not to be found in *any other* make, is the transparent lining.

Wrong: Woven in selected camel's hair in undyed effects, this rug has a wearing quality lacking in *all* ∧ rugs.

Right: Woven in selected camel's hair in undyed effects, this rug has a wearing quality lacking in *all other* rugs.

Correct: This attachment will not be found on *all* cars.

429. Ambiguity, humorous and otherwise, is often suggested by an illogical, inconsistent development of the thought.

Inconsistent: Any incivility or inattention on the part of employees will be appreciated if reported to the manager.

Better: The manager will appreciate it, if patrons will report any incivility or inattention on the part of employees.

Ambiguous: I offer for sale two fully modern houses, one at $6,000 and one at $6,500. *They won't last long*; so let me know at once.

Better: I offer for sale two fully modern houses, one at $6,000 and one at $6,500. As I expect to sell these houses very shortly, let me know whether you are interested.

43

Unity in the Sentence

430. Unity is the principle of construction that requires that a sentence deal with but a single complete thought, and that it deal with it in such a consistent and connected manner that the thought is clearly and effectively presented. Unity requires also that a thought that properly constitutes a unit shall not be scattered among several sentences.

431. Two or more statements that have no close connection with one another should not be embodied in one sentence.

Faulty: Our agent is a good salesman and plays the piano well.

Faulty: This washing-machine has no gears and will save you much work.

432. It is possible, sometimes, to correct a sentence made up of two statements lacking connection with each other by showing the connection between the statements.

Faulty: The entire load comes on the motor suddenly, and we expect to put a heavy fly-wheel on the motor shaft to carry it over these points of excessive load.

Better: As the entire load comes on the motor suddenly, we expect to put a heavy fly-wheel on the motor shaft to carry it over these points of excessive load.

Faulty: The snow was very heavy, and we could not make deliveries.

Better: As the snow was very heavy, we could not make deliveries.

433. Long sentences consisting of many statements connected with *and*'s and *but*'s are to be avoided.

Bad: The package was shipped to you by express on June 15, and we can prove this fact by the express receipt that we hold, but in accordance with your wishes we shall ask the express company to trace the shipment, and as soon as we hear from them we shall get in touch with you.

Better: The package was shipped to you by express on June 15. We can prove this fact by the express receipt that we hold. In accordance with your wishes, however, we shall ask the express company to trace the shipment. As soon as we hear from them we shall get in touch with you.

434. A long sentence, even though unified in idea, is usually incapable of making a single, definite impression on the reader's mind.

435. Unite into one sentence, phrases, clauses, and sentences that are closely and logically connected with one another in thought.

Bad: Our machine will handle 250 cards per minute. While no other machine can handle even 150.

Better: Our machine will handle 250 cards per minute; whereas no other machine can handle even 150.

Bad: Our accountant has already sent us two letters about your case. Also one report.

Better: Our accountant has already sent us two letters and one report about your case.

Bad: We have just received your telegram. It informs us of the non-arrival of your desk.

Better: We have just received your telegram, which informs us of the non-arrival of your desk.

436. Do not write two unrelated independent clauses following each other, with only a comma for separation. Either make two sentences or connect them with a conjunction. [This fault is sometimes called the "comma" fault.]

Bad: There are only a few of these suits left, we are selling them at a great reduction.

Better: There are only a few of these suits left. We are selling them at a great reduction.

Bad: Jackson left Cleveland yesterday, he will arrive at New York to-morrow.

Better: Jackson left Cleveland yesterday, and will arrive at New York to-morrow.

44

Coherence

440. Coherence is the principle that requires that the arrangement and relation of the words, phrases, or clauses in the sentence be logical, clear, and free from ambiguity.

441. Make sure that the word to which each modifier refers is unmistakable. As a general rule, this distinctness in reference is secured by keeping near together words and expressions that are closely related in thought.

442. Take special care to place an adverb as near as possible to the word it modifies.

Wrong: This company can't *even* handle its present orders.
Right: This company can't handle *even* its present orders.

Wrong: We *only* have ten shares of this stock.
Right: We have *only* ten shares of this stock. [See "only," Rule 540.]

Wrong: He explained why he could not wait *very pleasantly*.
Right: He *very pleasantly* explained why he could not wait.

Wrong: Every soap is *not* good for washing woolen blankets.
Right: *Not* every soap is good for washing woolen blankets.

443. Do not allow an adverb or adverbial phrase to "split" an infinitive.

"Split": The firm stands ready to *quickly deliver* the machine at any time.
Corrected: The firm stands ready to *deliver quickly* the machine at any time.

"Split": In order to *fully assure* you of our standing, we are mailing our latest report.
Corrected: In order *fully to assure* you of our standing, we are mailing our latest report.

NOTE.—The correctness of the "split" infinitives has many defenders. The main line of defense of its use in business English is based on the fact that there are many instances when "splitting" the infinitive secures clearness, smoothness, and force—especially valuable qualities in business letters and advertisements. If "splitting"

the infinitive will give more effectiveness, "split" it; but bear in mind that some persons object to its use. Compare the following sentences:

Not "split": I want *so to present* these facts that you will take immediate action.

"Split": I want *to so present* these facts that you will take immediate action.

444. Each phrase or clause should be so placed as to indicate distinctly what it modifies. [See Rules 781, 782, 783.]

Ambiguous: Fill out the credit blank inclosed *in ink*.

Right: Fill out, *in ink*, the inclosed credit blank.

Ambiguous: When I next see you, I shall show you *how inefficient purchasing* in small quantities is.

Recast: When I next see you, I shall show you how inefficient it is to purchase in small quantities.

Ambiguous: He entered my office just as the price of the stock jumped two points and walked nervously about the room.

Right: Just as the price of the stock jumped two points, he entered my office and walked nervously about the room.

Ambiguous: Our sales manager, a man considered to be a cracker-jack salesman, contrary to our wishes, started this new campaign.

Right: Our sales manager, who is considered to be a cracker-jack salesman, started this new campaign contrary to our wishes.

Ambiguous: When Moore failed to secure any orders from the customers in his territory, *in spite of his pleadings*, the manager discharged him.

Right: When Moore failed to secure any orders from the customers in his territory, the manager discharged him *in spite of his pleadings*.

Ambiguous: The driver hit the horse *with a heavy stick, which* at once ran away and disappeared around the corner.

Right: With a heavy stick the driver hit *the horse,* which at once ran away and disappeared around the corner.

445. Correlatives should be placed next to the expressions they are meant to connect.

Bad: Insiders in sugar *not only* continue to take stock, *but also* to create a great demand for it.

Good: Insiders in sugar continue *not only* to take stock, *but also* to create a great demand for it.

Bad: We *neither* have received your letter *nor* your telegram.

Good: We have received *neither* your letter *nor* your telegram.

45

Coördination and Subordination

450. Express parallel ideas in parallel construction. [As a rule, if one idea is expressed by a clause, the other also should be so expressed; if one idea is expressed by a phrase, the other also should be so expressed; etc.]

Bad: I have written to him *to send* me his report and *that he should also leave* immediately for Chicago.

[Note.—The infinitive construction "to send" and the subordinate clause construction "that he should leave" are not in parallel form.]

Good: I have written to him to *send* me his report and *also* to leave immediately for Chicago. [Or,]

I have written to him *that he should send* me his report and also *that he should leave* immediately for Chicago.

Bad: We wrote personal letters to customers who had formerly done business with us but now they were with our competitors.

Good: We wrote personal letters to customers *who* had formerly done business with us but *who were* now with our competitors.

Bad: The capital necessary *to start* the business and *for running* it several years is now at our disposal.

Good: The capital necessary *to start* the business and *to run* it for several years is now at our disposal.

Bad: *The use of personal collectors* is sometimes more effective than *to write collection letters.*

Good: Personal collectors are sometimes more effective than collection letters.

451. Do not change the subject unnecessarily. Hold to one point of view throughout the sentence, unless there is a reason for changing.

Bad: *I* have just finished writing my report, and *it* will be sent to you to-morrow.

Good: *I* have just finished writing my report, and shall send it to you to-morrow.

Bad: *In order to test this watch, it* was subjected to the extremes of heat and cold. [The point of view at the beginning is that of the persons who made the test. The point of view after the comma is that of the object that was tested.]

Good: *In order to test this watch, we* subjected it to the extremes of heat and cold. [The point of view throughout is that of the persons who tested the watch.]

Bad: Upon releasing the backward pressure, the wheel coasts on with entire freedom.

Good: After the backward pressure has been released, the wheel coasts on with entire freedom.

452. Closely related ideas of the same importance are said to be coördinate. But if one idea is so related to

another as to be dependent on that other, it is said to be subordinate.

Coördination of ideas: I went home and George went back to the office. [The sentence consists of two related ideas of equal rank—*i. e.*, "I went home," and "George went back to the office."]

Subordination of ideas: Because I was late, he discharged me. [The sentence consists of two related ideas of unequal rank. "He discharged me" can stand alone. Therefore it is an independent idea. "Because I was late" cannot stand alone and is therefore a dependent idea.]

When the ideas are coördinate, the construction of the sentence should bring out the fact; and, likewise, when one idea is subordinate to another, the construction of the sentence should indicate the subordination *and the exact relation between the ideas.* Coördination and subordination accurately shown by the use of the proper connectives [see Section 55] help the reader to secure the precise meaning of the sentence. Of two coördinate ideas the second may be said to be *added*, *consecutive*, *correlated*, or *adverse.*

453. An *added* idea simply means that we add a second statement to the first, without implying any further relationship.

Examples:

The company's auditor was in my office, *and* his assistants were at work on the books.

[The comma is generally used when "and" connects two independent clauses with *different* subjects.]

Harry called off the figures *and* I checked them.

[If the clauses are very short, the comma may be omitted.]

I read the proof-sheets of the new catalog *and* then mailed them to the printer.

[When two clauses have the same subject, the comma should ordinarily be omitted.]

Important Connectives Used Before Added Ideas

and	and also	also
	and besides	besides
	and furthermore	furthermore
	and likewise	likewise
	and moreover	moreover

NOTE.—The words in the third column above have not a strong conjunctive force. They are simply connective adverbs. When "and" is omitted before one of them, the two clauses should be separated by a semicolon. If the connective adverb now comes first in the second clause, it may be followed by a comma. If the connective adverb is not the first word in the second clause, it is both preceded and followed by a comma, whether "and" is used or not. Examples:

The box contained only four grinding-wheels, and moreover two of them were cracked.

The box contained only four grinding-wheels, and two of them, moreover, were cracked.

The box contained only four grinding-wheels; two of them, moreover, were cracked.

454. A *consecutive* idea relates a circumstance which is the natural outcome of the circumstances preceding.

Examples:

You had forgotten to sign the check; *therefore* I returned it.

He would not pay the C. O. D. charges, *and* so I brought back the package.

NOTE.—It is usually better to use a construction which definitely shows the sequence of cause and effect. [See Rule 458, note.]

Better: *As* he would not pay the C. O. D. charges, I brought back the package.

NOTE.—The connectives used before statements of simple consecutiveness are *accordingly*, *as a result*, *as a*

consequence, hence, so, therefore, thereupon, and *thus.* They are usually preceded by a semicolon, not by a comma.

455. *Correlated* ideas are those which are so similar that they may be yoked.

Important Correlating Connectives

not only.....but (also, even)	as.....as
(either).....or (else)	now.....now
(neither).....nor	both....and
no, not, never, etc...nor	the....the [with comparatives]

Other Correlatives

the former.....the latter
the one.....the other
on the one hand.....on the other
etc.

Examples:

Either the address on the box was wrong, *or* the delivery man was careless.

The longer we delay action *the* less chance we have.

NOTE 1.—Use correlatives to precede and connect only such elements as are strictly coördinate—*e. g.*, direct object and direct object, predicate and predicate verb, and clause and clause, etc. [See Rule 445.]

Wrong: He *not only* deducted a discount of 2%, *but also* the freight charges.

Right: He deducted *not only* a discount of 2%, *but also* the freight charges.

Wrong: The firm gave me *both* a bonus *and* raised my salary.

Right: The firm *both* gave me a bonus *and* raised my salary.

NOTE 2.—A coördinate element, offered as an alternative, is introduced by *or* or *nor* [not *and*].

Wrong: Every employee entering *and* leaving the building after 6 P.M. must sign at the information-desk.

Right: Every employee entering *or* leaving the building after 6 P.M. must sign at the information-desk.

456. An *adverse* idea expresses opposition or contrast to the idea that precedes.

Examples:

He wrote two letters, *but* failed to get a response.

They shipped the order, *notwithstanding the fact* that I had asked them to cancel it.

Important Adversative Connectives

although	nevertheless	rather
but	notwithstanding	still
however	on the contrary	though
in contrast to	on the other hand	whereas
in spite of	otherwise	yet

NOTE 1.—When *but* is used, it is preceded by a comma or by a semicolon, according to the nature of the pause between the clauses. Other adversative connectives, with the exception of *although*, should usually be preceded by a semicolon.

NOTE 2.—Do not introduce an adverse idea by *and* alone. Show the opposition or contrast in ideas by using an adversative connective.

Examples:

Wrong: He wrote two letters *and* failed to get a response.

Right: He wrote two letters, *but* failed to get a response.

Wrong: The work was easy, *and* he took a long while to do it.

Right: The work was easy, *and yet* he took a long while to do it.

457. Do not join a relative clause to the principal clause by *and* or *but*.

Bad: The automobile is equipped with new wire wheels *and which* add to its appearance.

Good: The automobile is equipped with new wire wheels *which* add to its appearance.

Bad: One of the best salesmen on the staff is John Ripley of New York City, *but who* is only twenty-six years old.

Good: One of the best salesmen on the staff is John Ripley of New York City, who is only twenty-six years of age.

Correct: He is a man in whom we can trust *and* from whom we can expect conscientious work. [In this sentence one relative clause is connected with another relative clause.]

458. Do not join one idea to a preceding idea by *and* unless the ideas are logically equal.

Vague: The shortage has not been made good by the railroad, *and* we must ask you to make it good.

Good: *As* the shortage has not been made good by the railroad, we must ask you to make it good.

NOTE.—Do not connect ideas by *and so* or *so* unless the relation in thought is obvious. Precision and emphasis (if desired) will be obtained by the use of a connective that expresses the connection more exactly.

Vague: The dial is illuminated by an electric bulb, *so* it can readily be seen at night.

Better: As the dial is illuminated by an electric bulb, it can readily be seen at night.

Vague: The reproducing-point is a genuine diamond, *so* it will not wear out.

Better: As the reproducing-point is a genuine diamond, it will not wear out.

459. Avoid the "House-That-Jack-Built" style of subordination—*i. e.*, do not use a series of similar clauses or a series of similar phrases in such a construction that the second depends on the first, the third on the second, and so on.

Faulty: On page 15 you will see the drawings *which* have been made of this engine *which* is the marvel of expert engineers.

Good: On page 15 you will see the drawings of this engine that is the marvel of expert engineers.

Faulty: The tobacco is treated by a patented process, *so that* the bite is taken out, *so that* smoking is made a pleasure to those smokers that have tender tongues.

Good: The tobacco is treated by a patented process, so that the bite is taken out. Smoking is thereby made a pleasure to those smokers that have tender tongues.

46

Emphasis Secured by Position

460. The principle of emphasis is of special importance in business English, for from its correct application come many of the rhetorical effects that make strong impressions on the reader. It is one means of making a sentence forceful.

461. Emphasis results from arrangement. It requires that the sentence be so arranged that the principal idea is brought into prominence and that the minor details are subordinated. It requires also that the important idea in the sentence be so presented that its importance cannot but be felt.

462. To secure emphasis avoid beginning sentences with words or phrases that are merely connectives.

Unemphatic: *In other words,* the American business man has been playing the game alone.

Better: The American business man, *in other words,* has been playing the game alone.

463. Avoid the use of *there are* and *there is* at the beginning of sentences.

Unemphatic: *There are* two special designs featured in E. & W. Shirts.

Better: In E. & W. Shirts, two special designs are featured.

Unemphatic: *There are* only five parts to this machine!

Better: This machine has only five parts!

464. Avoid a weak ending in an important sentence.

Unemphatic: We want to inform you that you have not sent in your check *for some reason or other.*

Better: We want to inform you that *for some reason or other* you have not sent in your check.

Unemphatic: It would be well for you to anticipate your holiday needs now, if your stock is not complete for the holiday season.

Better: If your stock is not complete for the holiday season, it would be well for you to anticipate your holiday needs now.

465. Do not "tack on" an additional clause at the end of a sentence which, apparently, is complete in thought.

Faulty: The other concern is planning to open a very strong advertising campaign; *or at least it is rumored so.*

Better: The other concern, it is rumored, is planning to open a very strong advertising campaign.

466. Unless emphasis is sought, do not strain to keep the often-prescribed rule that no sentence should end with a preposition. Ending a sentence with a preposition does not necessarily weaken a sentence.

Allowable: I left the receipt to be called *for*.

Allowable: His side of the story is the only side I know *of*.

Allowable: We were glad to hear of the success you were meeting *with*.

467. Do not use the participle in the absolute construction. It weakens the force of the sentence.

Weak: *This typewriter having won the contest,* we began to advertise strongly.

Better: After this typewriter had won the contest, we began to advertise strongly.

Unemphatic: A good filing system is an asset to a business, *it being a time-saver.*

Better: A good filing system is an asset to a business, for it is a time-saver.

468. A change from the usual order often makes a great change in emphasis; but be sure that awkwardness does not result.

Normal order: This is no common gum.

Changed: No common gum is this.

Normal: We did not receive his check until Tuesday.

Changed: Not until Tuesday did we receive his check.

NOTE.—As a rule, place the subordinate elements before the main clause.

Unemphatic: Reform right now if you have been making the mistake of looking upon these things as trifles.

Better: If you have been making the mistake of looking upon these things as trifles, reform right now.

469. Use the active voice of the verb unless there is a reason for doing otherwise. [The passive voice usually weakens the force of the sentence.]

Weak: You *were told* to report yesterday.

Stronger: I told you to report yesterday.

Weak: This material *has been tested* for three years by our engineers.

Stronger: Our engineers *have tested* this material for three years.

47

Emphasis Secured by Proportion

470. A word or an idea may often be emphasized by causing it to receive a larger proportion of attention than the other words of the sentence receive—that is, by repeating it. This device should be carefully used; otherwise it may appear strained.

Fairly emphatic: As you contracted to have the factory finished on April 24, I insist that you have it completed on that date.

More emphatic: As you contracted to have the factory *finished on April 24*, I insist that you have it *finished on April 24*.

Unemphatic: This automobile is distinctive not merely in the beauty of its lines, but in fineness of details, quality of materials, and workmanship.

Emphatic: This automobile is *distinctive—distinctive* not merely in the beauty of its lines, but *distinctive* in fineness of details, *distinctive* in quality of materials and workmanship.

471. Emphasis may often be secured by the use of climax. Climax is obtained by arranging in an ascending series, words, phrases, or clauses of noticeable difference in strength. This series usually consists of three members of which the first is the shortest and weakest; the last,

the longest and strongest. A series of four members is likely to be too long sustained and, hence, likely to drag.

Unemphatic: He is *insolent, dishonest,* and *lazy.*

Emphatic: He is *lazy, insolent,* and *dishonest.*

For the best cleanser, for an aid to a clear complexion, for something that is more than mere soap — there is only one choice — PALMOLIVE.

Besides its remarkable strength, besides its perfect writing and erasing qualities, and besides its ability to stand the severest test to which a business paper can be put—Lord's Linen Paper has a remarkably low price.

48

Euphony

480. Avoid the use of words and combinations of words which are difficult to pronounce.

Bad: We require a day *to do two* of these plates.

Bad: Fire-alarms *need never annoy* you if you *install our sprinkler system.*

Bad: Even before you open the *fat-packed sack* of Duke's Mixture . . .

481. Avoid the monotonous repetition of a word in a sentence. It not only sounds bad, but it also gives undue emphasis or prominence to unimportant words.

Bad: After we had received your *order,* we *ordered* our agents to *order* the lamps from Hackett & Company.

Good: After we had received your order we directed our agents to buy the lamps from Hackett & Company.

482. Avoid an unintentional rhyme.

Bad: We have made few *sales* on our No. 8 *pails.*

Bad: Do not *delay;* write *to-day.*

49

Variety in Sentence Structure

490. Sameness in sentence structure is a fatal fault in many business messages. The constant use of any one form of sentence or the monotonous repetition of the same kind of construction in sentences both annoys the reader and kills his interest. In this respect, read and compare the two paragraphs that follow:

1. The Comptometer should be installed in your accounting department. [Simple.] It will prove to be a big cost cutter. [Simple.] It will pay for itself in two months by saving you time. [Simple.] A great amount of hard figure work will be eliminated. [Simple.] The Comptometer can be used to figure costs. [Simple.] You can add trial balances, and make up pay-rolls and stock reports on it. [Loose and compound.]

2. Install the Comptometer in your accounting department and let it prove to you what a big cost cutter it is. [Imperative, loose, and compound.] Not only will it pay for itself in two months, but it will also eliminate a great amount of hard figure work. [First part is inverted; periodic, and correlated.] For figuring costs, for adding trial balances, for making up pay-rolls and stock reports—use the Comptometer. [Periodic.]

491. To secure variety, make use of the various types of sentences, *loose*, *periodic*, and *balanced*.

492. The loose sentence is a sentence so constructed that it may be closed at two or more places and yet make complete sense.

We have made you concession after concession (.) and have tried to keep you a satisfied customer, (.) but your last demand is too much. [The sentence may be closed after "concession" and after "customer."]

NOTE.—The loose sentence is the natural form of construction; hence it is very common. Whenever a special

effect or impression is desired, the loose sentence is of little value. A constant use of the loose sentence, moreover, gives an impression of looseness, lack of finish, and puerility.

493. The periodic sentence holds the complete thought in suspense until the end of the sentence.

Examples:
From whatever viewpoint true efficiency is judged, Firestone Non-Skids furnish the full answer.

For every musical occasion, for entertainments, or informal dances at home, or for more pretentious social events, the Columbia Grafonola is the ideal musical instrument.

NOTE.—The periodic sentence, since it is uncommon and of odd construction, is of valuable assistance in the securing of strength, finish, and variety in the composition as a whole. Whenever polish, dignity, and strength are desired, use the periodic-sentence form. Since most sentences are of the loose type, it is safe to advise the writer to use the periodic style, so far as can be done without apparent artifice. But observe this note of caution. The periodic style is slightly artificial and, if used too frequently, is likely to make the composition seem stiff, forced, and artificial.

494. The balanced sentence is made up of members similar in form, but often contrasted in meaning.

Examples:
Get the Welch habit; it's one that can't get you.

If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak.

We couldn't improve the powder; so we improved the box.

The more you know about good tools, the more you'll insist upon getting Barnard pliers.

NOTE.—Balanced sentences are particularly valuable as slogans for two reasons: they are easily remembered and easily quoted; they say much in a few words and, by means of suggestion, they bring out an important "talking point" of the article or service for which they are the slogans.

495. Inversion may be used to secure variety. [Inversion of a sentence is a change in the normal order.]

Normal: I agree with your first two recommendations.

Changed: With your first two recommendations, I agree.

496. Avoid unnecessary repetition of words. [See Rule 481.]

Bad: If you are thinking of *selecting* a *lawyer* to handle your collections, remember, in *selecting* such a *lawyer*, that you should *select* one whom you can trust.

Better: If you are thinking of selecting a lawyer to handle your collections, remember that you should choose one whom you can trust.

Chapter V

Words

50

Principles of Word Use

500. Words are the symbols of ideas; they are the medium for exchanging thoughts. Since a word, however, may not invariably stand for the same idea at all times, and to all persons, the writer of business English must make sure that his words stand for the same ideas to his reader that they do to him.

501. Every word in a business communication should be considered as a tool to do a certain part of the work; not as an ornament to the "style." It must do its full share toward accomplishing the purpose of the message.

502. As business English messages are usually of a practical sort—letters, advertisements, reports, and the like—the words must be practical. Beauty and elegance of expression are rarely sought. Homely, simple words are most commonly needed to make the desired impression and bring the desired response.

503. The words used in business messages are chiefly of the every-day, conversational type—words that you would naturally use if you were talking to your reader. Contractions and colloquial expressions, such as *can't*,

isn't, I'll, ring me up [for *telephone to me*], may ordinarily be used except in formal and dignified compositions.

504. Since words are the chief means by which ideas are conveyed to the reader, it follows that the better the writer's command of words, the better his ability to convey his ideas effectively. Knowing how to use words to get the best results involves an understanding of two sets of principles—the principles of *good use*, and those of *choice*. When out of several words, such as *apt*, *liable*, and *likely* [see Section 54], there is only one right word for the purpose in hand, the problem is a fairly easy one —it is solved by applying the laws of good usage; but when there are three or four words possible, such as *fragrance*, *scent*, *aroma*, and *smell*, and each one is right, so far as usage goes, it is further necessary to apply the principles of choice.

505. The first principle of choice is that words should be chosen that have precisely the shade of meaning intended. Precision demands, first of all, a wide and varied vocabulary and a keen appreciation of the fine distinctions between synonyms. Possessing this, you will not *say* a thing when you mean to *state* it [with some detail], or *assert* it [vigorously], or *claim* it [in the face of possible doubt], or *maintain* it [against opposition], or *declare* it [frankly and openly], or *suggest* it [mildly], or *venture* it [with hesitation or timidity]. You will not *think* a statement is true when in reality you only *suppose* or *assume* or *presume* it is. Or it may be that less strongly you *infer* or *imagine* it or more strongly *believe* it. Perhaps, with some fear, you *suspect* it. Again, it may be that the shade of meaning cannot be exactly conveyed by any verb and requires such an expression as, *have confidence that, have faith that, incline to opinion that,* or *am inclined to believe that.*

506. The selection of words is not a matter to be thought of too carefully during the active process of writing, for no one is more ineffective than the speaker or writer who fumbles for words. The good writer should have at his command a sufficient stock of words to enable him to form his ideas quickly and accurately. Moreover, he must learn how to word his ideas properly the first time, because he seldom will have the opportunity to re-dictate his letters.

507. All this means that a good writer must continually seek to enlarge his vocabulary. The wider the variety of words at his command, the greater will be his ability to choose a word that conveys the exact idea. Whenever he comes across a word he does not understand, he should look it up in a dictionary, learn its meaning, pronunciation, and spelling. Then, if it is suitable for his needs, he should use it three or four times in speaking or writing and thus make it his own.

NOTE.—It is advisable to have a good, handy dictionary on the desk so that it can be consulted freely and easily. Cheap dictionaries, and bulky, unhandy ones are usually inefficient.

51

Adaptation of Words

510. The diction of a business message is largely determined by the principle of adaptation to the reader or group of readers addressed. Every word should be within their vocabulary.

511. Simple words are safest. They are essential in messages to children, to adults of limited education, and to the masses generally. They should always be used

if the limitations of the reader's vocabulary are unknown. In all cases of doubt, use the shorter and simpler of two equivalent words. For example, use *pay* rather than *remuneration* or *emolument*, *clear* rather than *manifest* or *perspicuous*, *write* rather than *indite*, and so on.

512. As a rule, words of Anglo-Saxon origin are safer than foreign derivatives. Most readers of business messages are not classical scholars, and unless a word is familiar it is likely to be misunderstood by any one who cannot trace its derivation. Thus *headstrong* is preferable to *contumacious; frankness* to *ingenuousness; handwriting* to *chirography;* and so on.

Not clear: This soap is composed entirely of natural saponaceous ingredients of the highest emollient and detergent properties.

Better: This soap is made of pure materials of the highest softening and cleansing properties.

513. If the reader is known to be of a certain trade, it is not only safe, but very desirable, to use words that are in his special trade vocabulary or "lingo." To a printer one may write in printer's language; to a plumber, in plumber's language, and so on.

To a printer: Please set this in 12-point Caslon, single-leaded, 15 ems measure.

To an automobile repair-man: The clutch slips, and the valves need to be reground.

514. If the reader belongs to one of the professions, such as law, medicine, or engineering, it is safe and often wise to use technical terms with which he is presumably familiar.

Lawyer: *bailor, easement, tort.*

Physician: *sepsis, prophylaxis, emulsify.*

Financier: *bearish, depreciation, amortize, flotation.*

515. If the reader is a farmer, it is permissible to write in the homely vernacular of the country. Words peculiar to the section in which he lives may even be used, but only with caution. Such words as *folks*, *sun-up*, and *neighbor* are ordinarily well adapted to the farmer.

> If you could only see one of my stump-pullers in operation, I know you would not hesitate a minute about having one, too. I am convinced that no up-to-date farmer can see one without wanting it. In order to make it possible for the people in your locality actually to see one of my machines working, I am going to make an offer to a few men in each neighborhood so remarkable, so sure, so absolutely without risk, that it will put at least one exhibition stump-puller in every neighborhood in the country.

516. The diction of messages to women, especially women of the leisure class, should be dignified, even "literary." Derivatives from the French, and often French words that have not been adopted into the English language are often well adapted to women and also appropriate to the subjects of clothes and other articles in which style is an important factor.

> A bit less ethereal are the chiffon taffetas, the failles, the crêpe de chines, and brocaded crêpes—in many instances the vogue for printed effects and heavily brocaded silks is proclaimed.
>
> Touches of fur, marabou, swansdown, a sash, a corsage bouquet —there are innumerable decorative *motifs* that give each costume the novelty which the French so adore.

52

Correct Usage in Words

520. In order to be sure of clearness and correctness in the message, the words should generally be chosen from those that are in reputable use throughout the country at the present time. Adaptation to the reader [see

Section 51] may sometimes warrant exceptions to this rule, but in all cases of doubt it is essential to observe it.

521. Avoid slang and vulgarisms. Words not sanctioned by good writers and speakers are likely to be misunderstood, or to cause an unfavorable reaction in the mind of the reader.

Examples:

"You should worry"; "It is a cinch that we nail his order"; "This is a bird of a proposition"; *ain't, piker, gents, pants, punch, cop, kiddo, simp, boob.*

522. Avoid the use of newly-coined words that have not yet received the approval of good writers.

Examples:

Enthused, orated, suicided, disremember.

523. Avoid the use of obsolete words.

Examples:

Gotten (for *got*), *quoth* (for *said*).

524. Avoid sectionalisms, words that are used only in certain localities.

Examples:

Pesky, tote, chirk, crick.

525. Avoid foreign words, for your reader may not understand them.

Examples:

Faux pas, sine qua non, lapsus linguæ. [But see Rule 516.] "This meeting was held *secretly* [not, *sub rosa*].

526. Avoid using words in other than their accepted meanings. It is particularly important to avoid confusions of words that are spelled or pronounced somewhat alike. [For a partial list of common misuses, see Section 54.]

53

Spelling

530. A misspelled word or two in a letter may cause the reader to get the impression that the writer is either uneducated or careless. Many business men leave this important matter of spelling to their stenographers or typists—not always a safe practice. If you are not sure of the spelling of a word look it up in the dictionary.

531. Guard against misspelling words that resemble other words in looks or sound. Most of the words in the following list are often misspelled on account of such resemblances [*clothes, cloths*]. Several words are included, however, which differ in spelling in spite of a logical relation [*maintain, maintenance*].

accept (to receive)
except (to exclude; with the exception of)

advice (noun)
advise (verb)

affect (to influence)
effect (to bring about)

allusion (a reference)
illusion (a deceiving appearance)

all right
almost
already
altogether
always

aloud
allowed

alley (a narrow passage)
ally (a confederate)

altar (a structure used in worship)
alter (to change)

angel (a celestial being)
angle (the meeting-place of two lines)

appraise (to set a value on)
apprise (to inform)

ascent
assent

assistants (those who aid)
assistance (aid)

bad
bade (past tense of *to bid*)

bail (the security for the release of a prisoner)
bale (a large bundle)

bare
bear

baring (making bare)
barring (obstructing)
bearing (carrying)

born (brought into being)
borne (carried)

breath (noun)
breathe (verb)

by
buy

calender (a machine)
calendar (a register of the days, etc.)

capital (the sum invested in a business; the chief city, etc.)
capitol (a state-house)

canvas (a cloth)
canvass (to solicit)

cede (to give up)
seed

ceiling
sealing

cellar
seller

cereal (edible grain)
serial (pertaining to a series)

cession (a yielding up)
session (the actual sitting of a court or other body; the time during which the body meets)

clothes (garments)
cloths (pieces of cloth)

coarse (not fine)
course (route, method of behavior)

complement (to supply a deficiency)
compliment (to praise)

conscious (aware)
conscience (an inner moral sense)

corespondent (a joint respondent in a divorce suit)
correspondents (those who write communications)
correspondence (communication by letters)

currant (a dried berry)
current (a flow)

dairy
diary

device (noun)
devise (verb)

desert (a barren country)
dessert (food)

disappear
disappoint
disavowal
dissatisfaction
dissimilar
dissipate
dissuade

discomfit (to thwart)
discomfort (to make uneasy)

decent (respectable, etc.)
descent (downward slope or motion)
dissent (a disagreement)

dual (expressing the number 2)
duel (a combat between two persons)

faint
feint (a pretense; a mock attack)

fair
fare (the sum paid for a journey, etc.)

flea (an insect)
flee (to run away from)

formally (in a formal way)
formerly (in time past)

forth
forty
four
fourth

foul
fowl

gambling (wagering money on games of chance)
gamboling (frisking or leaping with joy)

gate
gait (a manner of walking)

great
grate

hear
here

heard
herd

hinder
hindrance

holly (a tree)
holy (hallowed, sacred)
wholly (altogether)

hoping (from hope)
hopping

ingenious (possessed of or proceeding from genius)
ingenuous (frank, open)

instance (an example)
instants (periods of time)

isle (an island)
aisle (a narrow passage)

its (possessive pronoun)
it's (contraction of *it is*)

key
quay (a wharf)

later (comparative of *late*)
latter (the second)

lead (a metal)
led (past tense of *to lead*)

leased (let by written contract)
least

lessen (verb)
lesson (noun)

loan
lone

loose (free, not bound)
lose (to suffer the loss of)

mane
main

maintain
maintenance

miner
minor

need
knead

nineteenth
ninetieth
ninety
ninth

not
knot

ore
oar

ought (should)
aught (anything)
naught (a cipher, nothing)

pail
pale

pain
pane

past (adjective, adverb, preposition)
passed (verb, past tense of *to pass*)

patience
patients

peace (a state of calm)
piece (a fragment)

peer (an equal; to look narrowly)
pier

perceive
perform
persevere
persuade
purchase
pursue

personal (private, individual)
personnel (the body of persons engaged in some activity)

Philippines
Filipino

plain (clear)
plain (flat region)
plane (geometrical term)

planed (past tense of *to plane*)
planned (past tense of *to plan*)

pleasant
please

pored (to look with close attention)
poured

precede
proceed
succeed
exceed
concede
intercede
recede
supersede

precedence (act or right of preceding)
precedents (things said or done before, now used as authority or model)

presence (state of being present)
presents (gifts)

prevail
prevalent

pride
pried (inspected closely; raised with a lever)

principal (chief, leading; the leading official of a school; a sum of money)
principle (a general truth)

profit
prophet

prophecy (noun)
prophesy (verb)

quite (completely)
quiet (still)

rain
reign (rule of a monarch)
rein (part of a harness)

rap
wrap (to roll together; a wrapper)

respectfully (with respect)
respectively (in a way proper to each; should never be used to close a letter)

rest
wrest (to force from by violence)

right
rite (ceremony)
write

ring
wring (to twist)

root (a part of a plant)
route (a way traveled)

sail
sale

scene (part of a play)
seen (past participle of *to see*)

shone (past tense of *shine*)
shown (past tense of *show*)

seize
siege

serge (twilled woolen stuff)
surge (a large wave)

sight (view, spectacle)
site (situation, a plot of ground reserved for some use)
cite (to bring forward as evidence)

speak
speech

stares (fixed looks)
stairs (a series of steps)

stationary (not moving)
stationery (writing materials)

statue (a sculptured likeness)
stature (height, figure)
statute (a law)

steal (to take by theft)
steel (a variety of iron)

tear
tier

than
then

their (belonging to them)
there (in that place)
they're (contraction of *they are*)

therefor (to that end, for that thing)
therefore (for that reason)

threw
through

till
until

to
too
two

track (an imprint, on a road)
tract (an area of land)
tract (a treatise)

village
villain

waist (the middle of the body; a garment)
waste (a loss, a useless expense)

waive (to forego)
wave (to move one way and the other)

weak (not strong)
week (seven days)

wear
ware

weather
whether

whole (entire)
hole (an opening)

who's (who is)
whose (the possessive of *who*)

wrote (past tense of *to write*)
rote (a repetition of words or sounds)

your (indicates possession)
you're (contraction of *you are*)

532. The words included in the following list are often misspelled.

A

absurd
accept
accidentally
accommodate
accumulate
accustom
acquainted
acquitted
across
addressed
adviser
affects
aggravate
alley
allotted
all right
ally
already
altar
alter
altogether
alumnus
always
amateur
among
analogous
analysis
angel
angle
annual
anxiety
apparatus
apparel
appearance
appropriate
arctic
argument
arising
arithmetic
arrange
arrival
ascend
asks
athletic
audience
auxiliary
awkward

B

balance
barbarous
baring
barring
based
bearing
becoming
begging
beginning
believing
benefited
biscuit
boundaries
brilliant
Britain
buoyant
bureau
business
busy

C

calendar
candidate
can't
cemetery
certain
changeable
changing
characteristic
chauffeur
choose
chose
chosen
chute
clothes
coarse
column
combating
coming
commission
committee
comparative
compel
compelled
competent
concede
conceivable
confectionery
conferred
conquer
conqueror
conscience
conscientious
considered
continuous
control
controlled
convenience
convenient
coöperate
corroborate
country
course
courteous
courtesy
criticize
cruelty
cylinder

D

dealt
debater
deceitful
decide
decision
deferred
definite
derived
descend
describe
description
despair
desperate
destroy
device
devise
difference
digging
dilemma
dining room
disappear
disappoint
disavowal
discipline
disease
dissatisfied
dissipate
distinction
distribute
distributor
divide
divine
doctor
don't

drudgery
dying

E

ecstasy
effects
eighth
eliminate
embarrass
eminent
encouraging
enemy
equipped
especially
etc.
everybody
exaggerate
exceed
excellent
except
exceptional
exhaust
exhilarate
existence
exorbitant
expense
experience
explanation

F

familiar
fascinate
feasible
February
fiery
fifth
finally
financier
forfeit
formally
formerly
forth
forty
four
fourth
frantically
fraternity
friend
fulfil
furniture

G

gambling
gauge
generally
government
governor
grammar
grandeur
grievous
guarantee
guaranty
guard
guess
guidance

H

harass
haul
having
height
hesitancy
holy
hoping
huge
humorous
hundredths
hurriedly
hygienic

I

imaginary
imitative
immediately
immigration
imminent
impromptu
incidentally
incidents
incredulous
independence
indiscreet
indispensable
induce
influence
infinite
instance
instant
intellectual
intelligence
intentionally
intercede
invitation
irrelevant
irresistible
its
it's
itself

J

judgment

K

knowledge

L

laboratory
ladies
laid
later
latter
lead
led
liable
library
license
lightning
likely
literature
loose
lose
losing
lying

M

maintain
maintenance
manual
manufacturer
many
marriage
Massachusetts
material
mathematics
mattress
meant
messenger
miniature
minutes
miscellaneous
mischievous
Mississippi
misspelled
momentous
month
murmur
muscle
mysterious

N

necessary
negroes
neither
nickel
nineteenth
ninetieth
ninety
ninth

noticeable
nowadays

O

oblige
obstacle
occasion
occasionally
occur
occurred
occurrence
occurring
o'clock
officers
omitted
omission
opinion
opportunity
optimistic
original
outrageous
overrun

P

paid
pantomime
parallel
parliament
particularly
partner
passenger
pastime
peaceable
perceive
perception
peremptory
perform
perhaps
permissible
perseverance
personal
personnel
perspiration
persuade
pertain
pervade
physical
picnic
picnicking
planned
pleasant
politician
politics
possession
possible
possibly
practically
prairie
precede
precedence
precedents
preference
preferred
prejudice
preparation
primitive
principal
principle
prisoner
privilege
probably
procedure
proceed
proceeding
prodigy
profession
professor
proffered
prohibition
promissory
prosecute
prove
psychology
purchase
pursue
putting

Q

quantity
quiet
quite

R

rapid
rarity
ready
really
recede
receive
recognize
recommend
reference
referred
regard
region
religion
religious
repetition
replies
representative
restaurant
rheumatism
ridiculous

S

sacrilegious
safety
sandwich
schedule
science
scream
screech
secede
seems
seize
sense
sentence
separate
sergeant
several
shiftless
shining
shone
shown
shriek
siege
similar
simulate
since
smooth
soliloquy
speak
specimen
speech
statement
stationary
stationery
statue
stature
statute
steal
steel
stops
stopped
stopping
stories
straight
stratagem
stretch
strictly
succeeds
successful
succession
summarize
superintendent
supersede
sure
surprise

suspicion
syllable
symmetrical

T

temperament
temperature
tendency
than
their
there
therefor
therefore
they're
thorough
thousandths
till
to
together
too
tragedy
track
tract
tranquillity
transferred
translate
treacherous
treasurer
tries
triple
trouble
truly
Tuesday
two
typical
tyranny

U

universally
until
using
usually

V

vacancy
vegetable
vengeance
vigilance
village
villain

W

wafer
waive
warehouse
weak
wear
weather
Wednesday
week
weird
welcome
welfare
where
wherever
whether
which
whole
wholly
who's
whose
wintry
wiry
within
without
women
world
writing
written

Y

your
you're

54

Common Misuses of Words

540. The following words and phrases are frequently misused:

A, an. *An* is used before vowel sounds; *a*, before consonant sounds. The sound of a first letter of a word must be noticed, for a consonant is often silent and the word really begins with a vowel sound; on the other hand, some letters may be either vowels or consonants, according to their position, and hence the word may begin seemingly with a vowel, but actually begins with a consonant. Examples: *a youth's suit, a union suit, an honor,* such *a one, a humble* letter.

Accept, except. *Accept* means *to receive with a consenting mind,* as in "They *accepted* the goods." *Except* [verb] means *to exclude,* as

in "We want you to *except* the last clause of this contract." *Except* [preposition] means *with the exception of*, as in "We found everything *except* the box of lace."

Advise. This word is used to excess and often incorrectly. It implies giving advice. Correct: "We *advise* you to sell your bonds at once."

Affect, effect. *Affect* means *to influence*, as in "The price of the material was greatly *affected* by this rumor." *Effect* [verb] means *to accomplish, to bring about, to cause*, as in "This new system will *effect* a great saving." *Effect* [noun] means *result*, as in "The *effect* of the dissolution was immediately felt." *Affect* is never used as a noun. *Effect* is used both as a verb and as a noun. *Affect* has another meaning, *to feign*, as in "He *affected* surprise at my statement."

Aggravate should never be used for *annoy, vex*, or *exasperate*. It means *to make worse*, as in "His financial difficulties were *aggravated* by this failure."

All ready, already. *Already* is an adverb and means *by this time*, as in "When I had arrived, the business had *already* been completed." *All ready*, an adjective phrase, means *wholly ready, prepared in every particular*, as in "We are *all ready* to begin negotiations with you."

All right should never be written *alright*.

Almost, most. *Almost* should be used as an adverb; *most*, as an adjective or noun. "*Most* all the employees reported" is incorrect. Write "*Almost* all the employees reported," or "*Most* of the employees reported." [*Most* is also used as an adverb to form the superlative, as in "The *most* beautiful hat in stock."]

Alternative, choice. *Alternative* means *the choice* between only *two* things.

Correct: One of three courses. [Not "One of three *alternatives*."]

He was given his *alternative* of these two courses of action.

He had his *choice* of five samples at the same price.

Among, between. *Among* is used in referring to more than two things; *between*, in referring to two only.

Correct: The dissension *among* the five firms arose over a matter of rebating.

The differences *between* the two departments were soon settled.

Amount should not be used for *number*. Do not say, "A large *amount* of people came to the store."

Anyplace, everyplace, etc. Use *in any place* or *anywhere*, etc., as in "He could not find the letter *anywhere* [not *anyplace*]." Or, "He could not find the letter *in any place* [not *anyplace*]."

Appreciate means *to estimate justly* or *to value highly*. It need not be modified by *greatly* or *very much*, although the usage is sanctioned by custom, as in "I *very much appreciate* the favor you have done me."

Apt, liable, likely. *Apt*, usually applied to persons, implies habitual tendency or natural capability, as "He is *apt* to delay action on such a matter." "He is *apt* at figures." *Apt*, sometimes applied to things, is used in the sense of *fitting, appropriate*, as "You used an *apt* word in describing him." *Liable* expresses openness to something disadvantageous; it suggests danger, as "By breaking your contract, you have become *liable* to damages." *Likely* expresses probability, as in "It is *likely* [not *apt, liable*] to rain to-morrow."

As . . . as, so . . . as. *So . . . as* is used in negative statements instead of *as . . . as*.

Correct: The catalogs are not *so* good-looking *as* you said they would be.

As, like. *As* is the correct word when a verb follows or is understood to follow. "He is not prompt in his payments *like* we are" is incorrect. It should be, "He is not prompt in his payments *as we are*." See *Like*.

As, that. *As* should never be confused with *that*. "We do not know *as* we can do that" is incorrect.

As per your order. Do not use. It is hackneyed and trite.

At about. Drop the *at*. "The letter was mailed *at* about two o'clock" is incorrect.

Awful should not be used loosely. It means *inspiring with awe*. "He does *awful* work" is incorrect.

Badly should not be used for *very much* or *a great deal.* "We want *badly* to have you come to see us" should read "We want *very much* to have you come to see us."

Balance, remainder, rest. It is incorrect to say "We spent the *balance* of the day at his office." *Balance* means the difference between the two sides of an account, as in "Our *balance* at the bank is $2,514." We say "The *rest* [not *balance*] of the directors stayed in the room," and "Kindly send the *remainder* [not *balance*] of the goods."

Bank on, to take stock in. Slang expressions used in the sense of *to rely on, to trust in.* They should generally be avoided.

Beg is used too much in business correspondence. Avoid using it.

Beside, besides, are not interchangeable. *Besides* means *in addition to, moreover,* as in "*Besides* this inducement, we can offer you others." *Beside* means *near, close to,* as in "His desk is *beside* the entrance." Never use *beside of.*

Best has little value now as a word because it has so often been misused. Be specific in your assertions. Do not write "Our goods are the *best* in the world." Tell the reader in what respect your goods are the best. *Best* and other superlatives do not tell the reader anything. Do not use them often.

Best of any. Do not use *best* or any other superlative with *any,* as in the following sentences marked "Wrong":

Wrong: This pencil-sharpener is the *best of any* I've tried.
Right: This pencil-sharpener is the *best of those* I've tried.

Wrong: My hats are the *most stylish of any* manufactured in America.
Right: My hats are the *most stylish of those* manufactured in America.

Blame it on is incorrectly used for *put the blame on* or *blame.* Blame *a person* [direct object] for a thing; do not blame *the thing* [it] *on* the person.

Both, each. Use *both* for two considered jointly; *each,* for one of two or more.

Correct: *Each salesman* [not *both salesmen*] was presented with a watch.

Each jobber [not *both jobbers*] tried to cut prices on the other.

Bound, determine. *Bound* refers to outside compulsion. *Determine* means *a decision made by a person.*

Correct: We are not *bound* by law to pay this debt, but we are *determined* to do so.

Bring, carry, fetch, take. These words have different meanings. *Bring* suggests motion toward the speaker, as in "*Bring* me that catalog." *Take* suggests motion away from the speaker, as in "*Take* these books from my desk." *Fetch* suggests going away from the speaker for a thing and returning with it. *Carry* suggests an indefinite motion.

But. Do not use *but* after a negative in the sense of *only.*

Wrong: There aren't *but* ten boxes left.
Right: There are *but* ten boxes left.

But that is often incorrectly used for *that.*

Correct: We have no doubt that [not *but that*] you sent the full dozen.
It is not unlikely that [not *but that*] you overlooked this fact.

But what is often incorrectly used for *that, but that,* etc.

Correct: I don't know *but that* [not *but what*] he is right.
I don't doubt *that* [not *but what*] he will try it again.
There is no salesman who does not make [not *but what makes;* not *but who makes*] some errors in his report. *But what* is correctly used in "He wrote a long letter, *but what* he said was not important," and "He does nothing *but what* he wants to do."

Can, may. *Can* denotes *power* or *ability* and should not be used for *may,* which denotes *permission.*

Wrong: *Can* I forward these suits to you?
Right: *May* I forward these suits to you?

Cannot but. This expression should not be used interchangeably with *can but,* as the two expressions differ in meaning. The expression "We *can but* try" means "All we can do is to try." "We *cannot but* try" means "We cannot help trying."

Can't seem is a vulgarism. Write "seem unable" or "do not seem able."

Wrong: I *can't seem* to get it.
Right: I *seem unable* to get it.

Capacity, ability. *Capacity* means the power of *receiving*. It has reference to the receptive powers, as in "He has the *capacity* to learn." *Ability* means the power *to perform, to do*. It has reference to the active exercise of our faculties, as in "He has the *ability* to do this work."

Character, reputation. A person's *character* is his real nature; his *reputation* is his supposed nature.

Common, mutual. *Common* means *belonging to more than one*. *Mutual* means *interchanged, reciprocal*.

Wrong: Hawkins and I had a *mutual* purpose in calling on Davis & Co.
Right: Hawkins and I had a *common* purpose in calling on Davis & Co.

Right: Since that time, George and I have had a *mutual* respect for each other.

Consul, council, counsel. A *consul* is an official governmental representative. A *council* is an assembly convened for consultation and advice. *Counsel* means *advice* or *a legal adviser*.

Custom, habit. *Custom* means *an action voluntarily repeated*. *Habit* means *a tendency to repeat a certain action without volition*.

Data is the plural of *datum*. Hence, we speak of *these* [not *this*] *data*, and say "My *data* were [not *was*] convincing."

Deal is a vulgarism for *transaction, arrangement, agreement*, etc.

Differ from, differ with. Persons, things, and opinions *differ from* one another; persons *differ in* opinion *with* one another. "I *differ from* him in attitude, but I do not *differ with* him with regard to the final action."

Different than. "Our paint is *different than* all others" is incorrect. It should read "Our paint is *different from* all others." *Different* should not be completed by a *than* clause, but always by a *from* phrase.

Directly is often misused for *as soon as*, as in "*Directly* we receive your order we shall ship it." This should read "*As soon as* we receive your order we shall ship it."

Disagree is generally followed by *with*, not *from*.

Correct: He *disagreed with* me over the terms of the contract.

Don't is a contraction of *do not;* therefore, it is ungrammatical when used with a subject in the third person singular. One may say "*I don't,*" but not "*He don't.*" Say "*He doesn't.*"

Due to should not be used unless it definitely refers to a noun. It is used in the sense of *attributable.*

Faulty: He succeeded, *due to* his persistence.
Correct: He succeeded *because of* his persistence. [Or,] His success was *due to* his persistence.

Each other should not be used for *one another. Each other* should not be used unless each member of a group is represented as in a certain relation to every other member.

Wrong: The changes in the style of cloaks to be worn next year are rapidly following *each other.*
Right: The changes in the style of cloaks to be worn next year are rapidly following *one another.*

Right: The two members of the firm are very much devoted to *each other.*
Right: In this crisis we have decided to stand by *each other.*

[*Each* member of the group governed by the word *we* has decided to stand by *every other* member.]

Effect. See **Affect.**

Either, neither. *Either* and *neither* should not be used to designate more than two persons or things. To designate one of three or more, write *any one* or *none.*

Wrong: The firm ordered three of its salesmen to report on Friday, but *neither* of them came in.
Right: The firm ordered three of its salesmen to report on Friday, but *none* of them came in.

Else. Write "*Somebody else's* desk"; not, "*Somebody's else* desk."

Enormity, enormousness. *Enormity* has reference to moral quality; *enormousness* to size.

Right: He does not realize the *enormity* of his crime.
Right: The *enormousness* of the undertaking did not affect them.

Enthuse. Not in good use.

Correct: He became *enthusiastic* [not *enthused*].

The sales prospects made me *enthusiastic* [not *enthused me*].

Esteemed is obsolete in such an expression as "Your *esteemed* letter."

Everyplace. See **Anyplace.**

Except (verb). See **Accept.**

Except (preposition) should not be used as a conjunction.

Wrong: The shippers won't do that *except* you ask them.
Right: The shippers won't do that *unless* you ask them.

Exceptional, exceptionable. *Exceptional* means *forming or making an exception, out of the ordinary. Exceptionable* means *liable to objection.*

Correct: In *exceptional* cases, we do allow an extra discount of 2 per cent.

I considered his manner of speaking *exceptionable.*

[Compare with " I took exception to his manner of speaking."]

Expect, suppose, suspect. *Expect* means *to entertain at least a slight belief that an event will happen. Suppose* means *to believe, to receive as true. Suspect* means *to mistrust, to imagine that something exists, but without proof.*

Correct: I *suppose* [not *expect*] that is so.

I *expect* [not *suspect*] that he will telephone to us.

I *suspect* that he has not treated us fairly.

Farther, further. *Farther* refers to distance; *further,* to that which is more or additional. "We wrote nothing *further.*" "He is *farther* from his source of supply than is any other dealer."

Favor should not be used for *letter.*

Fewer, less. *Fewer* refers to number; *less,* to amount, degree, quantity, etc.

Correct: The *fewer* [not *less*] accounts we have, the *less* money we shall need.

Find, locate. *Find* means *to come upon by seeking.* *Locate* means *to set in a particular place.*

Correct: I could not *find* [not *locate*] you in your office yesterday.

We shall *locate* our store in New Haven.

Former, latter. *Former* and *latter* should not be used to designate one of more than two persons or things. For designating one of three or more, say "first," "first-named," or "last," "last-named."

Got is very often misused. "What has that *got* to do with it?" should be "What has that to do with it?" "We have *got* to leave" should be "We are *obliged* to leave." "Have you *got* time?" should be "*Have* you time?" "I have *got* your order" is correct because it means I have *secured* his order. *Got* should, therefore, not be used unless the intended meaning is *secured.*

Gotten is an obsolete form. Say *got.*

Had of. See **Of.**

Had ought. *Ought* is never used with an auxiliary.

Wrong: He *had ought* to have written.
Right: He *ought* to have written.

Hanged, hung. *Hanged* should be used in reference only to an execution, as in "*Hanged* on the gallows."

Wrong: Many pictures had been *hanged* in the display window.
Right: Many pictures had been *hung* in the display window.

Hardly. Do not use *hardly* after a negative.

Wrong: We *couldn't hardly* change our plans now.
Right: We *could hardly* change our plans now.

Have got. See **Got.**

Healthy, healthful, wholesome. We say "a healthy [possessing health] man"; "a healthful [conducive to health] place"; "wholesome food."

Help should not be used for *employees, workers,* etc.

Imply, infer. Imply means *virtually to include* or *virtually to mean,* as in "Your attitude *implies* that you desire to break your contract." *Infer* means *to conclude, to deduce,* as in "I *infer* from your attitude that you desire to break your contract."

In is generally incorrect when used to express motion. Use *into*.

Correct: We saw him just as he stepped *into* [not *in*] the store.

Infer. See **Imply.**

Inside of. In expressions of time, say *within*, as in "This will be shipped *within* four days." [Not "*inside of* four days."]

Its, it's. The possessive pronoun is *its*. *It's* is the abbreviation of *it is*.

Kind, sort, are singular. Do not say "We do not have *those kind* of books in stock."

Kind of, sort of (1) should not be followed by *a* or *an*.

Wrong: We do not have that *kind of an* engine.
Right: We do not have that *kind of* engine.

Wrong: What *sort of a* man is he?
Right: What *sort of* man is he?

Kind of, sort of (2) should not be used to modify verbs or adjectives; say *somewhat, somehow,* or *rather*.

Wrong: Business is *sort of* quiet.
Right: Business is *rather* quiet.
Correct: I *rather* [not *kind of*] thought that he would do that.

Kindly. Be careful of the position of *kindly*.

Wrong: We *kindly* ask that you let us know by return mail.
Right: We ask that you *kindly* let us know by return mail.

Lay, lie, are frequently confounded. *Lay* [to put down] is a transitive verb and takes an object. *Lie* [to recline] is an intransitive verb and does not take an object. The principal parts are:

Present	*Past*	*Perfect*
I lie	I lay	I have lain
I lay	I laid	I have laid

Correct: I left the office and went home to *lie* down.
He *laid* the file on my desk.
Feeling sick, he *lay* down.
Feeling tired, I *laid* the books on the table.

Leave, let. *Leave* means *to abandon; let* means *to allow*.

Correct: *Let* [not *leave*] him be.
Let [not *leave*] that stand as it is.

Led, lead. *Lead* is commonly misused for the past tense [*led*] of *to lead*.

Less. See **Fewer.**

Liable. See **Apt.**

Like sometimes means *similar to*, as in "The selling plan was *like* one of which we had heard before." "He is *like* the old Mr. Arth." *Like*, in the sense of *in the same manner as*, is followed by a noun or a pronoun in the objective case, and is called by some grammarians an adverb; by others, a preposition; *e. g.*, "He writes *like* the bookkeeper." "He talks *like* me." *Like* should never be used to introduce a subject with a verb; use *as* or *as if*.

Correct: Do this *as* [not *like*] we want you to do it.
Do *as* [not *like*] I do.
It looks *as if* [not *like*] it may snow to-morrow.

Likely. See **Apt.**

Line (1). Do not use *line* in the sense of *kind* or *business*.

Wrong: In what *line* of business are you now working?
Right: In what *kind* of business are you now working?

Line (2). Avoid the use of *line* as shown in the following expressions:

Wrong: Do you keep anything in the brass *line?*
Wrong: I do not want anything in the advice *line* from you.
Right: I do not want any advice from you.

Lose, loose. *Loose* is commonly misused for *lose*.

Correct: If we *lose* [not *loose*] this sale you are to blame.

Loose means *to untie, to set free.*

Lot, lots. *Lot* means *a distinct part or parcel.* Do not use for *much* or *many*.

Correct: We know *many* [not *lots of*] business concerns that will be glad to buy this appliance.

Majority, plurality, most. *Majority* means more than half the whole number, as in "The *majority* of the directors favored my plan." [This suggests a formal count of votes.] "Most of the directors favored my plan." [This suggests an informal test of opinion.] Use *most* for *the greater number* in ordinary cases, when a technical majority or plurality is not meant. *Majority* is sometimes used to designate the number by which votes cast for one candidate exceed those of the opposition, as in "He was elected treasurer by a *majority* of five votes." *Plurality* designates a number greater than any other one number within the whole. In an election, A

receives 612 votes; B, 514 votes; and C, 230 votes. A's 612 votes constitutes a *plurality*, but not a *majority*. A's *plurality* [the excess of votes over the nearest competitor] is 98 votes.

May. See **Can.**

Might of. See **Of.**

Most. See **Almost.** See **Majority.**

Much, many. Do not use *much* for *many*. *Much* refers to quantity; *many*, to number.

Wrong: We shipped *as much as* twenty-five boxes.
Right: We shipped *as many as* twenty-five boxes.

Much, too, very. Do not use *too* or *very* with participles when the verbal idea prevails. Use *much, too much,* or *very much.*

Wrong: I was *too disturbed* to take any action.
Right: I was *too much disturbed* to take any action.

Wrong: We were *very pleased* to receive your letter.
Right: We were *much pleased* to receive your letter.

Must of. See **Of.**

Myself is an intensive or reflexive pronoun. Do not use it when the simple personal pronoun, *I* or *me*, will suffice.

Correct: The chief engineer and *I* [not *myself*] inspected the factory.
He wrote to John and *me* [not *myself*].

Near should not be used for *nearly*.

Wrong: The final returns from this bond will be not *near* so much as from the other.
Right: The final returns from this bond will be not *nearly* so much as from the other.

Neither. Do not use *neither* with reference to more than two objects.

Wrong: *Neither* of the four applicants came to the office.
Right: *Not one* of the four applicants came to the office.

Notoriety, notorious, are almost always used in an ill or unfavorable sense, as in "The *notoriety* of his crime" and "a *notorious* thief." Say "a business man *of note*" [not *a notorious business man*, unless you mean "a business man of ill repute"]; say "much *publicity* was given to this real-estate transaction" [not *notoriety*, unless you mean *unpleasant publicity*].

Of. *Could of, may of, might of, must of, should of,* and *would of* are illiterate vulgarisms for *could have, may have, might have, must have, should have,* and *would have.*

Off of. *Of* is unnecessary.

Right: When we took the cover *off* [not *off of*] the box, we noticed that the contents seemed to be damaged.

One. "Not *a one* returned to work." Omit *a.*

Ones. Do not say *the ones;* say *those.*

Wrong: *The ones* we have received are shop-worn.
Right: *Those* we have received are shop-worn.

Only is very commonly misplaced, so that the real meaning is not clear. Place *only* next to the word or phrase to be qualified.

He *only* signed the letter. [He did not dictate it.]
He signed *only* the letter. [He did not sign anything else.]
Only he signed the letter. [No one else signed it.]
He signed the letter *only.* [He did not sign anything else.]

Onto. *Upon,* or some equivalent expression, is usually preferable.

Ought. See **Had.**

Partial may mean *incomplete* or *biased.* Hence, ambiguity sometimes arises, as in "His letter contained a *partial* statement [incomplete? biased?] of the accident." Whenever you use *partial* guard against such ambiguity.

Party means a *person or group of persons taking part.* It is incorrectly used to mean simply a person, except in legal phrases.

Wrong: The *party* who ordered the samples was Fred Jones.
Right: The *person* who ordered the samples was Fred Jones.
Right: The contracting *parties* signed the lease.
Right: Each *party* to the contract was satisfied.

Per cent., percentage. *Per cent* or *per cent.* means *per hundred. Percentage* is a noun meaning *rate per cent, rate per hundred.*

Correct: The legal rate is six *per cent.*
In addition to my salary, I receive a *percentage* [not *per cent*] on all sales.

Plenty is incorrect when used as an adverb.

Wrong: He is *plenty* good for us and should be for you.
Right: He is good enough for us and should be for you.

Plurality. See **Majority.**

Posted. Use *inform* instead. Ledgers are *posted.* "He is well *informed* [not *posted*] on that point."

Practicable, practical. *Practicable* means *capable of being put into practice, feasible.* It is never used of persons, but of things only. "His plan is *practicable.*" *Practical,* used of persons, means *experienced by actual practice,* as in "He is a *practical* man in the candy business." *Practical,* used of things, means *valuable in practice, useful as opposed to theoretical,* as in "He has a *practical* knowledge of this business."

Prefer should be completed by *to, above,* or *before;* not by *than,* or *rather than.*

Wrong: I *prefer* this style of hat *rather than* that style.
Right: I *prefer* this style of hat *to* that style.

Wrong: We *prefer* dealing with you *than* with any one else.
Right: We *prefer* dealing with you *to* dealing with any one else.

Principal, principle. *Principal* [noun] means *a leader* or *chief; the employer of one who acts as agent; a sum on which interest accrues. Principal* [adjective] means *highest in character, rank,* or *importance. Principle* is used only as a noun and means *a general truth, information,* or *belief.*

Correct: The *principal* of this note must be paid by January 8.
He is the *principal* of the school.
The *principal* man is the Mayor.
It is the *principle* of the case which interests us.

Propose means *to offer for consideration,* as in "I *proposed* that we should enter the candy business." Do not use *propose* for *intend* or *purpose.*

Wrong: I *propose* to tell you the whole story.
Right: I *intend* to tell you the whole story.

Proposition means *a thing proposed* or *the act of proposing.* Do not use for *work, task, problem, project,* etc.

Correct: To handle these forty salesmen is a hard task [not *proposition*].

Proven should not be used except as an adjective; otherwise use *proved.*

Provided, providing. Do not use the participle *providing* [meaning *to furnish*] in place of the conjunction *provided* [meaning *on condition that, if*].

Wrong: *Providing* the firm is willing, I shall be glad to handle that.
Right: *Provided* the firm is willing, I shall be glad to handle that.

Quantity should not be used for *number*. See **Amount**.

Wrong: We have had a large *quantity* of suits returned to us.
Right: We have had a large *number* of suits returned to us.

Rarely ever. Do not use. Say *rarely* or *hardly ever*.

Wrong: They *rarely ever* act as agents.
Right: They *rarely* act as agents. [Or,] They *hardly ever* act as agents.

Real. Do not use for *very*.

Wrong: We consider this a *real* good offer.
Right: We consider this a *very* good offer.

Reason is, the. Such an expression as *the reason is* should not be completed with (1) a *because of* phrase, as in "The reason he did not agree to the contract was *because of* their impatience," (2) a *because* clause, as in "The reason he did not agree to the contract was *because* they were impatient," (3) a *due to* phrase, as in "The reason he did not agree to the contract was *due to* their impatience." Complete it with a *that* clause, as in "The reason he did not sell was *that* the price offered was too low."

Same. Do not use for *it, they,* etc., except in legal or quasi-legal writing.

Wrong: We have received your order and shall fill *same* within five days.
Right: We have received your order and shall fill *it* within five days.

Wrong: We are sending you two extra parts. If you cannot use the *same,* kindly return them to us.
Right: We are sending you two extra parts. If you cannot use *them,* kindly return them to us.

Scarcely. Do not use *scarcely* after a negative.

Wrong: There was *not scarcely* five dollars in the cash-register.
Right: There was *scarcely* five dollars in the cash-register.

Seem, can't seem. See **Can't.**

Seldom or ever. Used incorrectly for *seldom or never,* and *seldom if ever.*

Shall and Will. See Rule 763.

Should of. See **Of.**

Show up. Vulgarly used in the sense of *appear, come, be present,* or in the sense of *show* or *expose.*

Wrong: He *showed up* at the last minute.
Right: He *appeared* at the last minute.

Wrong: We are going to *show up* your last transaction.
Right: We are going to *expose* your last transaction.

Size. Do not use *size* as an adjective; use *sized* or *of size.*

Wrong: We are sure that you can use these larger *size* plates.
Right: We are sure that you can use these larger *sized* plates.

Wrong: We have in stock every *size* tire.
Right: We have in stock tires *of every size.*

Size up. Vulgarly used in the sense of *judge,* estimate, as "It didn't take long *to size* him *up.*"

Some is often incorrectly used for *somewhat.*

Correct: This plot of land is *somewhat larger* than French's. [Not *some larger.*]

Some place. Misused for *somewhere.*

Correct: He put it *somewhere* [not *some place*].

Sort of. See **Kind of.**

Such. (1) Do not use *who, which,* or *that* in the relative clause completing *such;* use *as.*

Wrong: He offered to complete the transaction under *such* conditions *that* we proposed.
Wrong: *Such* officers *who* see fit should sign and mail the inclosed card.

(2) When *such* is completed by a result clause use *that* alone, not *so that.*

Wrong: We are bound by *such* an agreement *so that* we are unable to do business with you.
Right: We are bound by *such* an agreement *that* we are unable to do business with you.

Take used in connection with other verbs is sometimes superfluous.

Wrong: *Take and use* the bottle of polish which we are sending to you.

Right: *Use* the bottle of polish which we are sending to you.

That [relative pronoun]. See Who.

That there. See This here.

Therefore, therefor, are often confounded. *Therefore* means *for that reason,* as in "As we have carefully tested this varnish for five years, we *therefore* recommend it to you." *Therefor* means *for that, for this, for it,* as in "The party of the second part agrees to pay *therefor* the sum of $500."

These here. See This here.

These kind, these sort. See Kind.

This here, these here, that there, those there. Do not use. Say *this, these, those,* or *that.*

Through. Do not use in the sense of *finished, left.*

Wrong: We are not *through* with the construction of the building.

Right: We have not *finished* with the construction of the building.

Wrong: He got *through* with us in April.

Right: He *left* us in April.

Till, until, are interchangeable when the meaning is *to the time of.*

To [preposition] is often carelessly used for *too* [adverb].

Correct: He has gone *too* [not *to*] far in this matter.

Too alone should not modify a past participle, as in "I was *too disturbed* to do anything." Insert *much.* See Much.

Transpire is not correctly used in the sense of *occur* or *happen.* It means *to become known.*

Wrong: The robbery *transpired* at 12 o'clock when every one was at lunch.

Right: The robbery *occurred* at 12 o'clock when every one was at lunch.

Unique means *the only one of its kind.* It does not mean *odd* or *rare.*

Correct: These Japanese prints are very rare [not *unique*].

Unique is incapable of comparison. We cannot say "These wristwatches are *most unique.*"

Up should not be used with such words as *divide, finish, open, settle, write;* as in "He *finished up* his work and then *wrote up* his report."

Very is a much overworked word. Like *best,* it has lost a great deal of its power. See Much, also.

Way should be used with a preposition.

Wrong: Why did you act *that way?*

Right: Why did you act *in that way?*

What. See **But what.**

Where is often misused for *that.*

Wrong: I saw in your report *where* we should use a new system.

Right: I saw in your report your recommendation *that* we should use a new system.

Which. Do not use *which* to refer to persons. See Who.

Wrong: The employees *which* signed that paper ought to be discharged.

Right: The employees *who* signed that paper ought to be discharged.

Who, which, that [as relative pronouns]. *Who* relates usually to persons, as in "We shall send our attorney, *who* will try to make an agreement with you." It is usually better to use *which* in referring to animals. *Which* relates to animals and things, as in "The cattle *which* we shipped you should have been looked after more carefully," "Some of the books *which* we received were damaged." *That* relates to persons, animals, and things, as in "The only man *that* can do this kind of advertising is Frank Worth," "Prices ruled low on all the calves *that* we sent to Chicago," "The only point *that* you should remember is the quality of this silk." *Who* and *which* introduce both restrictive and unrestrictive clauses; *that,* usually a restrictive clause only. [See Rule 845, Notes 1 and 2.]

Wholesome. See **Healthy.**

Whose is the possessive case of *who* and not of *which*. Do not use it in referring to inanimate things.

Wrong: I turned to the next page, on *whose* margin certain figures had been written.

Right: I turned to the next page, on the margin *of which* certain figures had been written.

Without should not be used in the sense of *unless*.

Wrong: I told him not to do that *without* he first asked me.

55

Connectives

550. Clearness depends, in large measure, on the proper choice of connecting words.

551. Beware of the use of *as* and *since* to introduce a causal or temporal clause. *As* may be used to express cause, *e. g.*, "As (because) he is an old customer, we must show him consideration," or to express time, *e. g.*, "As (when) I entered the room, he left." As a result of this double use of *as*, the reader may momentarily secure the wrong meaning.

Misleading: *As* I was going to the bank, he asked me to have a check certified.

Better: *Inasmuch as* I was going to the bank, he asked me to have a check certified.

Misleading: *Since* the manufacturers have increased the price of sugar to the wholesale trade, we are compelled to raise our price to all retailers.

Better: *Because* the manufacturers have increased the price of sugar to the wholesale trade, we are compelled to raise our price to all retailers.

552. Do not use *as*, *because*, *how*, *where*, etc., for *that* or *whether*.

Wrong: I don't see *as* we can help by staying here.
Right: I don't see *that* we can help by staying here.

Wrong: He wrote *how* he had not ordered the plow.
Right: He wrote *that* he had not ordered the plow.

Ambiguous: I saw in the paper *where* there was a shortage in the coal supply.
Right: I saw in the paper *that* there was a shortage in the coal supply.

Divided use: We don't know yet *whether* the option has expired.
We don't know yet *if* the option has expired.
[*Whether* is preferable.]
Divided use: I'll let you know later the reason *why* I accepted.
I'll let you know later the reason *that* I accepted.

553. Beware of the use of *while*. [*While* may be used to express either time or concession; hence, the reader may momentarily become confused.]

Misleading: *While* he was working hard, he did not get results.
Better: *Although* he was working hard, he did not get results.

Misleading: Mr. Boyden fiercely attacked the new advertising plan, *while* I defended it.
Better: Mr. Boyden fiercely attacked the new advertising plan; *but* I defended it.

554. The following list of the most commonly used connectives will help the writer to have at his command enough connectives so that he can choose the one most suitable to his need.

Cause: as, because, for, inasmuch as, now that, since.
Concession: although, even if, in spite of, notwithstanding, though.
Condition: but that, except that, if, if only, in case that, provided that.

Degree or Comparison: as, as . . . as, as if, more than, rather than, than, the more . . . the more (or the comparative degree of other adjectives).

Manner: as, as if.

Place: whence, where, wherever, whither.

Purpose: for the purpose of, for the sake of, in order that, so that, that, with a view to.

Result: so that, so . . . as, so . . . that, such . . . that.

Time: after, as, as long as, as often as, before, ever since, just as, meanwhile, now that, prior to, since, then, till, until, when, whenever, whereupon, while.

555. Many mistakes are made in the use of prepositions. Consider carefully the following brief list of words with the appropriate preposition to be used with each:

agree *with* (a person)
agree *to* (a proposition)
bestow *upon*
compare *with* (to determine value)
compare *to* (because of similarity)
comply *with*
confide *in* (to trust in)
confide *to* (to intrust to)
confer *on* (to give, to talk about)
confer *with* (to talk with)
convenient *to* (a place)
convenient *for* (a purpose)
dependent *on*
differ *from* (person or thing)
differ *with* (in opinion)
different *from*
glad *of*
need *of*
part *from* (a person)
part *with* (a thing)
profit *by*
prohibit *from*
reconcile *to* (a person)
reconcile *with* (a statement)
think *of* or *about*

56

Forceful Diction

560. The desirable quality of force depends largely on the words used. Commonplace, worn-out, and vague words are the cause of many weak and insipid letters and advertisements. Concrete, specific, and telling words do

much to bring about strong and forceful business communications.

561. Avoid hackneyed and trite words and expressions; they are liable to make your writing dull and lifeless.

Examples:

It stands to reason, beggars description, last but not least, conspicuous by his absence, along these lines, considerably the worse for wear.

NOTE.—It is especially advisable to avoid the use of the commonplace, stereotyped words and expressions that are sometimes mistakenly thought to be business English.

Examples:

Your favor of the 15th instant to hand and in reply would say . . .
Yours of the 2d ultimo at hand . . .
Your esteemed favor of the 8th received . . .
We beg [leave] to . . . We beg to remain . . .
We beg to state . . . Believe me . . .
Hoping to hear from you soon, we are . . .
Thanking you in advance . . . And oblige . . .
We are inclosing herewith . . . Please find inclosed . . .
Answering yours of the 10th inst., we beg leave to say . . .
Concerning yours of the 12th ultimo . . .
Referring to yours of even date . . .

NOTE.—Do not use *ultimo* or *ult.*, *instant* or *inst.*, *approximo* or *prox.*, but always use the name of the month; *e. g.*, *January 5;* not *the 5th ultimo.*

562. Concrete words will add force to a message. [A concrete word is one that presents a sense picture to the mind.]

Abstract: These cutting-pliers are *very strong* and *sharp.*
Concrete: These cutting-pliers will *snip* heavy wire that ordinary cutters will hardly mark.

Abstract: This self-starter will *turn* your engine.
Concrete: This self-starter will *spin* your engine.

563. Figurative language will help to make the thought (1) clearer and forceful, and (2) more agreeable and attractive. Like concrete words, it visualizes the idea for the reader.

You have often watched a Columbia Six glide along the frozen road—as quietly and smoothly as on a summer's day.

You may have awakened to hear the air valve of your radiator hissing steam like a peanut-stand.

This electric furnace develops a terrific, withering heat—so intense that it would cause granite to run like water.

Systems Bond is the paper with the bank-note feel.

564. In using figurative language, beware of the following faults:

a. Do not "mix" the figures of speech.

Bad: He is the only man in the organization who is able to steer it on its march to success.

Good: He is the only man in the organization who is able to guide it on its march to success.

Bad: The war that has been waged on fraudulent advertising has reached the goal of success.

Good: The war that has been waged on fraudulent advertising has been victorious.

Bad: This article has passed through the fire of long tests and is now ripe for exploitation. [The first figure, "passed through the fire," is incongruous with the second figure, "is now ripe."]

Good: This article has passed through the fire of long tests and is now ready for exploitation.

b. Do not blend the figurative with the literal.

Bad: Upon entering the store, his eye was struck by the new fixture. [The figure, "was struck," is too literal.]
Good: Upon entering the store, he saw the new fixture.

Bad: He threw his whole soul and the $5,000 his aunt had given him into the new campaign. [In such cases as this it is necessary to recast the entire sentence.]
Recast: He entered heartily into the campaign and contributed to it the $5,000 his aunt had given him.

c. Avoid figurative language that has an unpleasant or negative suggestion.

Our business reputation is as clean as a hound's tooth.

Each chocolate is like a jewel incased in fine, rich coating.

d. Avoid figurative language that is not close to the reader's experience.

"Dark as Erebus" conveys little information.
"Dark as a coal-hole" would be better.

"Chew Sprigley's gum and you will have a breath sweet as a cow's breath" means nothing to a city-bred man.

e. Avoid figurative language that is trite.

Smooth as silk, hard as nails, white as snow.

f. Avoid far-fetched, inappropriate figures of speech.

These men's coats hang as straight from the shoulders as a rope from the gallows.

We are as full of hosiery as an egg is full of meat.

565. Certain words by association are able to suggest vivid impressions. Such words, because they express so much, are helpful in securing force. "Build your own home" is more forceful and appealing than "Build your

own house." The word "home" appeals to the reader much more strongly than does the word "house," because with *home* are associated many pleasant thoughts. In the sentence, "We want every customer to be a friend," the word "friend" suggests the likable qualities of helpfulness, fair-dealing, and cordiality—qualities that the reader associates with "friend." On the other hand, such words as *complaint, you claim,* and *we are surprised* have so long been associated with disagreeable and unpleasant matters that care must now be taken in using them. The word "substitute" literally means "to put in the place of another"; but from association with the idea, "Beware of substitutes," it has acquired a negative suggestion—i. e., "to put in the place of a better (article)." The word "cheap" [meaning *purchasable at a low price*] has come to have a negative meaning—i. e., "to have small value"; hence, *inexpensive* is often to be preferred.

566. Specific words will add force to a message. [A specific word is one that conveys a definite or particular meaning as opposed to an indefinite or general meaning.]

General: This blade will give you *many* good shaves.
Specific: This blade is guaranteed to give you 500 satisfactory shaves.

General: Every time your car skids, you *wear down your tires.*
Specific: Every time your car skids, you *grind off miles and miles* of tire service.

General: This car has a long wheel-base.
Specific: This car has a wheel-base 124 inches long.

General: Our product made a remarkable showing at the last contest.
Specific: Our typewriting machine won three first prizes at the typewriting contest held in New York City, June 24, 1919.

567. Avoid the use of crude superlatives. Overemphasis defeats its own ends. Avoid such words or expressions as *the best, the most economical, the very latest, the finest;* they have been so often used that the reader no longer believes them; besides, they have been worn threadbare.

57

Word Emphasis

570. Many writers, possibly because of a mistaken idea of the principle of proportion, use "big" words whenever they have an important idea to express—and at other times also. The fact is, however, that the really big ideas are ordinarily conveyed most impressively by small words. Pretentious expressions usually defeat their own purpose and should be avoided.

Examples:

"May I venture to obtrude"; "I hope you will acquit me of any seeming indelicacy or obtrusiveness for encroaching upon your valuable time in the capacity of an entire stranger." *Edifice* for *building, mortuarial parlors* for *undertaking rooms, tonsorial artist* for *barber, emporium* for *store,* a *sumptuous collation* for a *good dinner.*

571. Tautology is a particularly bad habit that results, not in greater emphasis, but in weakness. Two words should not be used to express an idea that is completely contained in one. Avoid such expressions as the following:

Gather together [the word "gather" means "to bring together"], *collect together, combined together, kill him dead, final end, final outcome, entirely eliminated, necessary requisite, new innovation, inclosed herewith, full complement, need not necessarily.*

572. Intensives may be added to a personal pronoun for emphasis. They should rarely be substituted for the personal pronoun, except when the pronoun would result in awkwardness or ambiguity. Do not be afraid to use *I*.

Right: *You* told me this *yourself*.

Wrong: The Secretary and *myself* will represent the corporation at the meeting.

Right: The Secretary and *I* will represent the corporation at the meeting.

58

Tone in Diction

580. The tone of a letter is due largely to the suggestion or connotation of the words. Sometimes a single word may strongly affect the tone; more often a combination of words is responsible. The writer of a business message should therefore give careful consideration to the matter of tone in his word choice. He should aim to produce a tone that is suitable to his subject as well as to the mood of his reader. Ordinarily it should be positive and pleasant.

581. Negative words or words suggesting unpleasant feelings should be used with caution, for they are likely to produce an offensive tone.

Examples:

Complaint, trouble, annoyance, neglect, carelessness, dissatisfaction, failure.

582. Words that have been used in the current slang of the street should be avoided in any message that needs the slightest dignity. This rule applies not only to words

of slang coinage, but also to many words of excellent origin that have been debased by their associates.

Examples:

Swell, mighty, fake, nifty, grand, awful, slick.

583. Words and contractions that are distinctly colloquial should be used only where the circumstances warrant informality of language.

Examples:

Grit, fellow, don't, can't, bank on, pep.

584. Words of unpleasant sound should be avoided if a more euphonious substitute can be found. Words that begin with *sn* derive disagreeable suggestions from *sneak, snake, snarl, snore, snare, snub, snob,* and many more. Words that end in *um* or *ude* are usually bad. Compare the suggestion of *prudent* and *prude;* of *student* and the slang contraction *stude.*

585. Words of similar meaning often differ greatly in suggestion or "atmosphere" because of the circumstances in which we have previously met them. Those of favorable atmosphere should naturally be chosen in preference to those that have bad associations for the majority of people.

Compare the following: *crazy, insane, demented; lie, untruth; rotten, decayed; belly, abdomen; bankruptcy, receivership, liquidation; drummer, salesman, solicitor, representative; pool-room, pocket billiard academy; instalment, part payment.*

NOTE.—The use of the more pleasant word for an unpleasant idea (this practice is sometimes called "euphemism") is not invariably to be recommended. Sometimes the "shorter and uglier word" is preferable.

586. Once the tone of the letter has been decided upon, this tone should be maintained throughout. Any false note that is struck destroys the effect of the whole letter.

> The Merchants' City Bank of New York has purchased bonds of the above loan to the amount of five million dollars, description of which is contained in the inclosed circular.
>
> We are able to offer these bonds with accumulated interest, less the broker's commission of ¼%, at 94. We desire to make you an advance offer of any part of this figure. *This is pretty good stuff, don't you think? Why not take on a line of it?*

59

Style in Diction

590. A writer's individuality shows more quickly and noticeably in his diction than in any other element of business English. Here he has ample room for personal preferences. Within reason these preferences should be allowed to govern his diction, but it is essential that he conform in some degree to the style of the house he represents, and that he keep in mind the class of readers whom he addresses.

591. It is a wise plan for the head correspondent, or some one else in authoritative position, to draw up a list of words that are peculiar to the firm's correspondence, with a brief definition of each one. Such a step is almost imperative if the correspondence is largely technical. The list enables new correspondents to express the ideas of the house without resorting to round-about phrases and without the danger of embarrassing misuses of words.

592. Frequently a list of words that are to be avoided may also be prepared. A candy manufacturer, for example, may prefer not to have the word "factory" used

in referring to his kitchens; an advertising firm may wish to guard against abbreviations of "advertisement," and so on. Style in diction is rarely a matter of absolute right and wrong; usually it depends on individual preference, determined as much by the suggestion as by the meaning of words.

593. The house should establish definitely its preference in the matter of abbreviations. In some cases the routine character of the correspondence and the limited range of those it reaches may be such as to permit the use of a considerable number of time-saving abbreviations. In other cases, these same abbreviations might be the cause of frequent misunderstandings. Following is a list of the more common abbreviations and their meanings:

abst. abstract
acct. or *a/c.* account
A. D. In the year of our Lord (Since the birth of Christ)
advt. or *ad.* advertisement
agt. agent
A. M. forenoon
amt. amount
anon. anonymous
art. article
assn. association
asst. assistant
asst. assorted
Ave. avenue
A1. first class

bal. balance
bbl. barrel
bdl. bundle
bds. boards
B. C. Before Christ
B/E. bill of exchange
bkt. basket
B/L. bill of lading
bldg. building
blk. black
b. o. buyer's option
Bro(s). Brother, Brothers
bu. bushel
B/P. Bills payable
B/R. Bills receivable
B/S. bill of sale

c. or *cts.* cents
c. a. f. cost and freight
cap. capital
cf. compare
chap. chapter
c. i. f. cost, insurance, freight
Co. company
C/O. care of
C. O. D. Cash on delivery
cr. creditor
c/s or *cs.* cases
c. w. o. cash with order
cwt. hundredweight

d. pence
dept. department
disct. discount
div. dividend
do. ditto (the same)
doz. dozen
dr. debtor
D. V. God willing

ea. each
ed. editor
e. e. errors excepted
e. & o. e. errors and omissions excepted
Eng. English
et al. and others
etc. et cetera (and so forth)
ex. example
exch. or *ex.* exchange
exp. expense
exp. express
e. g. for example

F. A. S. free aside ship
f. or *fol.* folio
fcp. foolscap
fig. figure
F. O. B. free on board
for'd. forward
Fr. French
fr. francs
frt. or *fgt.* freight
ft. feet or foot

gal. gallon
gen. or *gen'l.* general
G. T. C. good till canceled
gr. gro. great gross
gro. gross

hdkf. handkerchief
hf. half
hhd. hogshead
h. p. horse power
hund. hundred

id. the same
i. e. that is
in. inches
Inc. Incorporated
ins. insurance
inst. instant (the present month)
int. interest
I. O. U. I owe you

jour. journal
jr. junior

lb. pound or pounds
l. t. long ton
Ltd. Limited (With name of British firm it signifies a limited liability corporation)

M. thousand
m. or *min.* minute
mdse. merchandise
mem. or *memo.* memorandum
mfd. manufactured
mfg. manufacturing
mfr. manufacturer
mgr. manager
mss. manuscripts

n. b. note carefully
no.(s) number (s)
N. P. Notary Public

O. K. all correct
oz. ounce or ounces

p. (*pp.*) page (pages)
p. & l. profit and loss
payt. payment

p. c. per cent
pc. piece
pd. paid
pk. peck
pkg. package
P. M. afternoon
P. O. post office
pr. pair
pref. preferred
pres. president
pro tem. for the time being
prox. next month
P. S. postscript

qr. quarter
qt. quart
q. v. which see

rec'd. received
recr. receiver
reg. registered
R. R. railroad
ret. returned
r. s. v. p. please reply
Ry. railway

s. shillings
S/D. sight draft
sec. or *secy.* secretary
sh. share
shipt. shipment
sic. thus (Ordinarily bracketed in a quotation to certify that the preceding word is accurately quoted)
sq. square
sr. senior
St. saint
St. street
stor. storage
str. steamer
super. superfine
supt. superintendent

t. b. trial balance
t. f. till forbidden
tc. tierces
tel. telegraph
tr. transpose
treas. treasurer

ult. last month

ves. vessel
via by way of
vid. see
viz. namely
vol. volume
vs. versus

W/B. way bill
wt. weight

yd. yard
yr. year

Commercial Characters

@ at
a/c account
& and
% per cent
c/o care of
$ dollars
£ pound sterling

Chapter VI

Business Reports

60

The Importance of Business Reports

600. A business report is a logical, systematic presentation of information about some specific phase of business. It may contain also the writer's recommendations and conclusions based on the facts given.

601. The purpose of a report is to present facts for the information of an interested reader or group of readers. Usually these facts serve as a basis of someone's action.

602. Reports are of many kinds. They range from the brief analysis of one man's activities for a single day to the complete summary of a great corporation's operation for a whole year; from a short bank report which is almost all figures to a three-hundred page descriptive report of an investigation of marketing conditions in foreign countries.

603. As a rule, reports that contain recommendations and conclusions are more important (at least so far as the writer is concerned) than are those that present only the facts. The former demand that the business judgment of the writer be exercised, with resulting responsibility on him.

604. The slogan in business is "Put it in writing." Hence, nearly every one in business is sooner or later

asked to make a report—salesmen, managers, treasurers, experts, etc. And since a report usually proceeds from a subordinate to a superior, the making of a report is generally a serious undertaking. The superior often judges the subordinate by his report. No matter how much time or effort the writer may have devoted to securing the information, his efforts and ability are judged by the tangible results as shown by his report.

61

Adaptation in the Report

610. The purpose for which the report is to be used will determine its nature and arrangement. If the report is personal and confidential and is to be seen by only one person, it may be written in the form of a personal letter with the proper adaptation to the reader. But if it is to be published and distributed widely, it should be more dignified and formal both in language and in arrangement.

611. If the report is to go to the head of a department and is for his information alone, technical words and phrases are appropriate; but if it is to go to a group who are not likely to understand the technical language, or if it is to go to the public, the language must be made popular.

612. The questions of adaptation in language, mood, character, and substance that are of such importance in other types of business communications, cause little trouble to the writer of the business report. He seldom needs to adapt his work to the reader, for the report generally goes to one who is interested.

62

The Qualities of the Report

620. The essential qualities of a business report are accuracy, clearness, and convenience of reference.

621. Accuracy is essential because the reader often bases his action upon the information presented to him. If this information is unreliable, he is liable to make a serious business mistake—and the responsibility will be placed upon the writer. In view of this responsibility, the writer of a report should be exceedingly careful of his facts and statements. He should make sure that his facts are reliable and his statements sound. Too many reports are written that are based on insufficient investigation, suppositions, careless analysis, and faulty reasoning. The cold, hard *facts* are wanted.

622. Since a report seeks to present information, it must be clear and easily understood by the reader. The writer should have little trouble in this respect, for he is unhampered by adaptation or style. He merely needs to present his ideas in a straightforward, simple, clean-cut manner. He should use simple, plain language and should avoid technical terms unless he knows that the reader will understand them. Wherever possible, he should use maps, diagrams, graphs, tabulations of figures, illustrations, and any other similar method to secure clearness. They are more vivid than pages of description or explanation.

623. Many readers will not read the report from beginning to end. Instead, they will skip through it to find the points in which they are interested. Moreover, most reports are filed for future reference. When the reader

consults a report, he may desire to secure information on only one point in it. For these reasons, therefore, the arrangement and form of the report should be such as to permit of ready and convenient reference. It should have numerous subheads written in capitals, underlined, or in some other way separated from the body of the reading-matter, so that they can be seen at a glance. Sometimes they are placed in the marginal space. At other times they are boxed by rules and placed in the reading-matter at the margin. In every case, margins should be wide and paragraphs should be separated by an abundance of white space. The arrangement of these headings and topics is a most important consideration in a report.

63

Unity in the Report

630. The principle of unity, as applied to a report, demands that all facts, information, and statements shall be essential to the subject in hand; that all unessentials shall be excluded.

631. The beginning of a report should state its object, the ground to be covered, and the sources of facts stated (*i. e.*, whether they have been obtained by personal observation, by talk with employees, or otherwise), and the authority by which the reporter is making the report. The end should be a summary of the essential facts given and a review of the conclusions reached throughout.

An Example of a Presentation

To the Board of Directors of the Standard Motor Gear Company.

Gentlemen:

In compliance with the vote passed at your last meeting, January 21, 1920, that "The sales manager shall submit a report

have been realizing for some time past that they have been very much slighted by the company.

FAULTS OF THE PRESENT SELLING SYSTEM

Territory not fully covered because of small number of salesmen.

After a reading of the foregoing matter on the present system, it will be seen that certain great faults exist. Of these faults, the first that I desire to discuss is the fact that the salesmen composing our present sales force have been able to cover only a small part of the territory assigned to them.

Each of these salesmen (they are on a salary and commission basis) has been assigned a certain district or territory in the United States. On personal investigation and from reports submitted I have found that of the twenty-four districts which have been alloted to salesmen, only four have been anywhere near covered. By that I mean that only four salesmen of twenty-four to whom exclusive teritory had been assigned have been able to meet the known prospects of their districts. The following table shows in concrete form this wretched condition:

Number of active prospects on the market	Number of prospects met by salesmen	
18,500	7,200	39%

Fig. 4

Limited number of prospects sold.

Another fault with the present selling system is the limited number of prospects sold. From the table (Fig. 4) given above, it will be seen that 7,200

Arrangement of Page of Typewritten Report

on the sales system now in use, together with his recommendations as to how his department may be improved," I herewith present a report entitled "Report on.....Company."

I have personally examined the condition of my department and have considered carefully every method whereby sales may be increased. I hope that the Board will take under special consideration the remedies suggested for the faults of our present selling system.

An Example of a Conclusion

In conclusion, allow me to say that I hope the Board will pass favorably upon the system as outlined in this report and embodied in the recommendations, for I firmly believe that, if the report be accepted and the recommendations passed, the Board will feel satisfied with the results.

Respectfully submitted,

632. Nothing should be included in the report unless it pertains to the title and is germane to it. Likewise, each subtitle must cover every point contained in the passage which it titles.

Accountants' Reports

633. The accountant's report usually consists of four main divisions: (1) the presentation; (2) the certificate; (3) comments; and (4) exhibits and schedules.

634. The presentation is the same as that in the ordinary report, but in addition includes a statement as to the contents of the whole report; *e. g.*, "A certificate, ten pages of comments, and the following exhibits and schedules . . ."

635. The certificate certifies that the audit has been made and is correct. This is signed by the accountant. These certificates are of two kinds—qualified and unqualified. A qualified certificate states that the correctness of the audit is vouched for, *subject, however, to the*

comments. An unqualified certificate, as its name implies, is not thus qualified.

636. The comments in many cases constitute the major part of the report and are of great importance to the reader. Comments have four main purposes: (1) They bring sharply to the attention of the reader a particular fact that might be passed by in the examination of the figures given in the schedules; (2) they make clear certain statements and figures in the schedules; (3) they describe the work that has been done, and may tell what has not been done; (4) they contain suggestions and recommendations, if recommendations are asked for.

637. The first step to be taken preparatory to writing the report, and to be taken even before the process of gathering the material is begun, is to decide on the specific title and scope of the report. Unless the writer has determined definitely in his own mind what his report is to cover, he cannot very well gather his material or make his investigation. He must have something by which to judge whether each bit of information he secures is essential and is, therefore, to be noted; or unessential and to be passed by.

638. It is usually advisable that, during the investigation, the information, as secured, be noted on cards, with only one point to a card, so that all the data may later be more easily arranged.

64

Coherence in the Report

640. After the material has been secured, the next step is to arrange it so that it may be presented in a

proper order. To secure this end, an outline should be constructed. Its use will not only save the writer's time, but will make the labor of writing the report easier, and will aid greatly in securing a more satisfactory result. Moreover, the main topics and sub-topics of the outline can be made to serve as the main headings and sub-headings of the report.

641. An outline is a properly coördinated arrangement of the important facts which are to be included. In other words, it is a condensed form of notes. A common fault is that it is made too soon after notes have been taken on the subject. The material should have been collected some little time and the subject allowed to shape itself before the outline is given an opportunity to crystallize.

642. The five steps taken in the making of an outline are:

1. The statement of the definitely limited subject.
2. The selection of the point of view.
3. The selection and arrangement of the main topics.
4. The subdivision of the main topics.
5. Revision to secure clearness, unity, simplicity, and proportion.

643. In dividing the subject to secure main topics, some definite logical principle should be followed—*i. e.*, the division should be made geographically, functionally, chronologically, and the like. If the report is to be on sales possibilities of a high-grade candy in the Eastern cities, the following division of material would be manifestly illogical:

Boston
New York City
Retailers
Philadelphia
Advertising

644. After the writer has made the division of material, he may find that some of the divisions are unimportant and can either be omitted or united with some other division. Or, he may discover that his subject should be more definitely limited.

645. After the division into main topics has been made, they should be arranged in a proper order, so that progress from one topic to the next is logical and easy. The order to be followed may be the order of the time at which the various events happened, the order of cause to effect, the descriptive order with the general or broad description first and the detailed description following, and the like.

646. The outline should be simple and clean-cut in construction. An outline that contains too many details defeats its own purpose—that of furnishing the writer with a skeleton plan from which he may work.

647. After the main topics have been secured, each should be divided into sub-topics. So far as possible, topics should be expressed in complete sentences.

648. An example of an outline for a sales report is as follows:

Report on Selling System of Standard Motor Gear Co.

Presentation:

I The Present Selling System—

1 Tabulated comparison of sales, this year with last.

2 Field and prospects.

3 Methods of selling.

a. Office sales.

b. Salesmen on salary and commission.

c. Agency sales.

II Faults of the Present System—

1 Small number of salesmen results in:

a. An inconsiderable amount of territory covered.
b. Limited number of prospects followed up and sold.
c. Competitors entering field.

2 Waste of 50% of salesman's time caused by:

a. Lack of advertising.
b. Lack of follow-up letters.

3 Lack of coöperation with agencies.

III Remedies Suggested—

1 Increase in salesmen so that:

a. More territory may be covered.
b. More prospects may be followed up and sold.
c. Competition may be met.

2 Appropriation for advertising and follow-up campaigns to save 50% of salesman's time.

3 Closer coöperation with agencies.

IV Probable Results—

1 Increase in sales because of larger force of salesmen.

2 The advertising and follow-up systems will result in:

a. Direct sales from advertising and follow-up systems.
b. Increase of 100% in selling power of present salesmen.

3 Increased sales through agencies.

V Recommendations—

1 Increase in number of salesmen.

2 Appropriation for:

a. Advertising campaign.
b. Follow-up campaign.

3 Better treatment of agencies.

Conclusion.

649. After the outline has assumed the above form, it should be carefully scrutinized for any defects in its mechanical and logical arrangement.

65

Connection in the Report

650. After the outline has been completed and carefully revised, the real work of writing is half done. All that is now left is to develop each topic of the outline in turn and to provide the necessary connectives [see Sections 25, 35, 45, 55] between the various parts. In some places it will be well to use a paragraph to summarize what has been presented and to introduce what is to follow.

66

Emphasis in the Report

660. In reports, as in compositions of other forms, it is often necessary to emphasize statements or ideas. The same application of the principle of emphasis discussed in Sections 26, 36, 46, and 56 may be used in reports to secure the necessary effect.

661. The use of a heading will often give prominence to an idea.

662. Recommendations should be separated from and follow the facts on which they are based. A good arrangement is secured either by grouping all recommendations at the end of the report or by placing a recommendation at the end of each division of facts which necessitates one. If a report is long and involves the making of recommendations on several topics, it is better to place the recommendations throughout the report following each separate division of facts or statements. If the report is short they may be grouped at the end. In

many cases where recommendations are scattered throughout the report, they are summed up at the end.

663. Recommendations should not be hidden within a paragraph, but should be paragraphed separately.

> We therefore recommend that an appropriation of $10,000 be made for advertising and follow-up campaigns.
>
> We also recommend that the present sales force be increased to forty-two.

67

Proportion in the Report

670. A fault commonly found in reports is that too much space is given to minor or unimportant ideas, and not enough space to the important ideas. Proper proportion can be secured only if the writer uses discrimination.

671. Before the writer begins the report, he should carefully consider the topics in his outline and decide which are vital and which are relatively unimportant. And again, before he starts developing any one of the topics, he should decide on its relative importance. If the topic is essential, he should develop it fully; but if the topic is unimportant, he should present it briefly.

672. Circumstances influence the amount of space to be given to an idea. For example, if the writer knows that the reader is already familiar with most of the information in a topic, he should not develop that topic as he otherwise might need to. The writer should try to ascertain on which topics the reader might desire detailed information, and then act accordingly.

673. Wordiness in a report is a serious fault. A long report may be required by the amount of material. Length is not harmful; tediousness is. The reader wants the essential facts only.

68

Tone in the Report

680. According to tone, reports may be divided into two classes, formal and informal.

681. The informal report is usually brief and is intended for a reader who is known personally to the writer. The tone is essentially similar to that of an ordinary business letter written to the same individual.

682. The formal report, which is ordinarily to be read by strangers, has a greater stiffness of phraseology and tone. The writer usually refers to himself in the third person—if he does refer to himself at all. He carefully avoids expressions that savor of familiarity. The language should not be pretentious, but should never reach the level of the colloquial tone. The following illustrates good and bad tone in the formal report:

Bad: Out of 200 dealers visited and from whom I obtained definite answers, a small modicum, to wit, 14, were willing to subscribe to the plan. None of them evinced any enthusiasm or gave me any reason for believing they could be depended on to boost it.

Better: Out of 200 dealers who were visited by the writer and from whom definite answers were received, only 14 (or 7%) were willing to adopt the plan. None of them showed enthusiasm or gave any indication that he would support it whole-heartedly.

683. The writer should guard against a tone that shows that he is biased. It is only natural that the writer, from gathering the material and from thinking it over, should have come to some definite conclusion himself concerning the subject of the report. Then in the writing of the report, he often unconsciously uses a tone which indicates to the reader that the writer is trying to urge him to the

same conclusion. The reader will resent such a tone, for he desires to make his own decision. The writer should, therefore, present his information in a cold, matter-of-fact tone.

684. The tone should be convincing. The facts should be presented just as they are—with no exaggeration, no coloring. They should be presented in a conservative, reserved manner. The reader will then have more confidence in the information.

69

Style in the Report

690. The report should be written in a simple, plain, straightforward style. No literary embellishments are needed. The reader wants the facts—not an interesting story.

691. No attempt should be made to make the facts interesting. Such an attempt might be taken as an indication that the writer has substituted emotion for reason.

Florid, unsuitable style: The terrific cataclysm into which all Europe has been plunged has disrupted the whole structure of international relations, and the means and methods of transportation have not been permitted to pass unscathed. Indeed, one of the greatest sufferers from the conflict, economically speaking, has been transoceanic shipping.

An improved introduction: When the war broke out, it was unavoidable that transportation conditions throughout the world should be immediately affected. Until one of the belligerents proved strong enough to obtain and hold the sea power, the shipping of all the warring nations had to remain in the harbor.

Chapter VII

Grammar

70

Grammar—Good Use in the Sentence

700. Grammar includes the body of rules that govern the forms and relationships of words in sentences. These rules represent the crystallization of correct usage—the usage of the majority of good writers.

701. Most grammatical rules are logical and follow a general system. The system of English grammar is not as rigid or extensive, however, as the systems of most foreign languages, and includes only a few changes in the forms of words.

702. There are many exceptions to the general system of rules. They are called idioms. These idioms have been established in the language, not because of logic, but because of convenience and general acceptance.

Right: Try and send him this order to-day.
[For: Try to send him this order to-day.]

Right: He was given a fine reception.
[For: A fine reception was given to him.]

Right: I will write you soon.
[For: I will write to you soon.]

703. New idioms are continually being established by usage. As soon as they are accepted by good authorities they may safely be used in business English, whether they are in accordance with previously adopted rules or not.

704. Observance of grammatical rules sometimes results in an awkward and pedantic construction. For example, in the sentence, "Neither he nor I *are* connected with this plan," the verb *are* is incorrectly used, according to grammar. [See Rule 754.] The sentence should read, "Neither he nor I *am* connected with this plan"; but if it were so written the reader would be struck by the odd construction, would pause, and his attention would probably be distracted from the thought. It is better, therefore, to avoid any unusual grammatical construction, even if it is correct, that will call attention to its grammar and thereby distract the reader's attention. In such cases the writer may use a different form in which to express the same idea, as, "He is not connected with this plan, nor am I." The writer should write so that the reader will not notice the words or the grammatical construction used, but will see only the idea that is being expressed. The medium of the communication should never attract attention to himself.

705. Any rule in this chapter that might lead to such awkwardness and consequent distraction is marked by an asterisk (*). Wherever possible the construction so marked should be avoided and the thought expressed in a different way.

706. In many instances the construction that sounds right, but is incorrect according to grammatical rule, will sooner or later be established as a new idiom. The writer, even of business letters, however, should usually wait until a new form is approved before venturing to use it.

707. Only the grammatical rules that are frequently violated or that cause confusion are included in this handbook.

71

Nouns and Pronouns—Possessive Case

710. Possession or ownership may be shown by the preposition *of*, as in the phrase, "the hand of the man"; or by changing the form of the word to the possessive case, as in "the *man's* hand." The possessive case should be used only with words denoting persons or other objects that have the power of ownership. Thus we write, "the *manager's* check-book," but, "the cover of the check-book." It is better to write "the president of the corporation" than "the corporation's president."

711. The possessive of singular nouns is formed by the addition of an apostrophe and *s* ('s).

The *company's* policy.
The *secretary's* report.

NOTE 1.—Usage has established many exceptions to this rule. Among these idioms are: "the *day's* work," "a *week's* wages," "a three *hours'* job."

NOTE 2.—Even though a noun ends in *s*, its possessive singular is formed in the usual way by the addition of an apostrophe and *s* ('s), unless the repetition of the *s* sound makes the word difficult to pronounce or unpleasant in sound. Hence we write "*Lewis's* salary," "*Jones's* account"; but "for goodness' sake," "Ulysses' sales territory."

NOTE 3.—It will be well to notice the following: Somebody *else's* [not *somebody's else*], everybody *else's* [not *everybody's else*], no one *else's* [not *no one's else*].

712. The possessive of plural nouns that end in *s* is formed by the addition of an apostrophe (') alone.

Youths' suits.
Ladies' umbrellas.
Boys' blouses.

713. The possessive of plural nouns that do not end in *s* is formed by the addition of an apostrophe and *s* ('s).

Men's shoes.
Children's clothing.
Women's cloaks.

714. The possessive of a compound noun or noun phrase is formed by the addition of an apostrophe and *s* ('s) to the last word only.

The *secretary-treasurer's* signature.
The *Palace Theater's* new show.

NOTE 1.—When two or more nouns are so used that *joint* possession is indicated, the sign of the possessive ('s) is added to the last only.

Lord & Taylor's windows.
John and George's new houses. [This expression indicates that John and George are *joint owners* of the new houses.]

NOTE 2.—But if separate possession is indicated, the sign of the possessive follows each name.

John's and *George's* new houses. [This expression indicates that both John and George *separately* own new houses.]
Wanamaker's and *Gimbel's* new advertising campaigns.

715. The double possessive has become correct through usage.

That check of Thompson's.
Those bonds of mine.

NOTE 3.—Sometimes the double possessive is required to show the true meaning. Distinguish between the following two expressions:

A painting of my father.
A painting of my father's.

716. The possessive pronouns *ours, yours, theirs, hers, its* should not be written with an apostrophe.

72

Pronouns—As Subject and Object

720. Nouns have the same form when used either as the subject or as the object of a verb. Pronouns have different forms for subject and object, called the nominative and objective cases. The following are the most commonly used forms:

Nominative	*Objective*	*Possessive*
I	me	my or mine
you	you	your or yours
he	him	his
she	her	her or hers
it	it	its
we	us	our or ours
you	you	your or yours
they	them	their or theirs
who	whom	whose
which	which	whose [see Rule 710]

721. The subject of a verb should be in the nominative case, whether the verb is expressed or merely understood.

Wrong: You know these facts as well as *me*.
Right: You know these facts as well as *I*. [*I* is the subject of the verb *know*, understood. If the whole sentence were written, it would read: "You know these facts as well as I know them."]

Wrong: *He*, not *us*, should stand the loss.
Right: *He*, not *we*, should stand the loss.
Better: *He* should stand the loss; not *we*.

Wrong: Johnson & Company are worth more than *us*.
Right: Johnson & Company are worth more than *we* [are].

Wrong: These are customers *whom* we feel should be given credit.
Right: These are customers *who* we feel should be given credit. [See Rule 726.]

Wrong: The two brothers and *us* have been in business for twenty years.
Right: The two brothers and *we* have been in business for twenty years.

Wrong: They must think that *us* retailers are in business for our health.
Right: They must think that *we* retailers are in business for our health.

Wrong: *Whom* do you think I am?
Right: *Who* do you think I am?

722. The direct object of a verb is in the objective case.

Right: In his letter, he invited you and *me* [not *I*].
Right: *Whom* did you meet at his office?
Right: The manager sent Fred and *me* [not *I*] to London.

723. A pronoun used as the object of a preposition is in the objective case.

Right: This is merely a difference of opinion between you and *me* [not *I*].
Right: Most of the jobbers are living up to their agreements with you and *me* [not *I*].
Right: *Whom* did you send it to?
Right: Anybody could have done it except you and *me* [not *I*].

Divided use: Every one but *him* realized how it would help the trade.

Every one but *he* realized how it would help the trade. [The accusative form, *him*, is preferable to the nominative form, *he*, because *but* is considered a preposition, like *except*.]

***724.** The subject of an infinitive is in the objective case.

*Right: Give the job to *whomever* you find *to have had* the most experience.

NOTE.—Distinguish the construction of this sentence from: "Give the job to *whoever* has had the most experience." [See Rule 726.]

725. A pronoun used to complete any form of the verb *to be* has the same case as the subject of that verb.

Right: It was *I* [not *me*] that signed the letter.
Right: Was it *they* to whom you telegraphed?
Right: I did not know until later that it was *she* [not *her*].
Right: The directors are Corbin, Oakes, and *I* [not *me*].
Right: If you were *I* [not *me*], would you do this?
Right: I am often taken to be *he* [not *him*].
Right: I made certain of its being *he* [not *him*]. [Compare with: "I made certain that it was *he*."]
Right: We believe the consignee to be *him* [not *he*]. [Distinguish the construction of this sentence from: "The consignee, we believe, is *he*."]

***726.** Be especially careful of the case of the pronoun in a subordinate clause. Remember that its case is determined by the construction of the pronoun *in that clause*.

Wrong: The cashier, *whom* I thought could help me, refused to give me any information.

*Right: The cashier, *who* I thought could help me, refused to give me any information. "Who" is the subject of "could help" and, hence, the nominative case must be used. "I thought" is merely a parenthetical phrase and does not control the case of "who." To make this point

*See Rule 705.

clear in your mind, read the sentence as follows: "The cashier, who [I thought] could help me, refused to give me any information."

Wrong: Give the job to *whomever* you find has had the most experience.

*Right: Give the job to *whoever* you find has had the most experience. ["Whoever" is the subject of the verb "has had"; not the object of the preposition "to." The object of "to" is the entire clause "whoever you find has had the most experience."]

Wrong: You may hire *whoever* you wish.
Right: You may hire *whomever* you wish.

Wrong: Tell *whomever* is there that we must have better service.
Right: Tell *whoever* is there that we must have better service.

Wrong: He is as good a salesman as *me*.
Right: He is as good a salesman as *I* [am].

Wrong: Reports have been coming in faster from you than *he*.
*Correct, but awkward: Reports have been coming in faster from you than *him*. [*Him* is correctly in the accusative case, for it is used with "from" in "they have been coming from him," understood. It is better, however, to write the sentence in full, or to recast it, as "You have sent in reports faster than he has."

727. An appositive is in the same case as the substantive with which it is in apposition.

Right: Similar contracts were sent to us—Hamilton and *me* [not *I*]. ["Hamilton and me" is in apposition with "us"; that is, it is set next to "us" by way of explanation, and denotes the same persons. Since "us" is in the accusative case, both "Hamilton" and "me" must be in the accusative case.]

Right: The three of us—you, *he*, and *I*—should talk over the possibility of forming a new corporation.

---

*See Rule 705.

73

Pronouns—Reference

730. As every pronoun is a word used in place of a noun (or nounphrase), it is essential that there be no doubt as to the noun to which it refers. When the writer is doubtful of the form to be used, he should try to think of the noun for which the pronoun is acting as substitute.

Wrong: Every woman should try Regal Baking Powder. Once *they* try it, they will always use it.
Right: Every woman should try Regal Baking Powder. Once *she* tries it, *she* will always use it. [This is equivalent to "Once every woman tries it, every woman will always use it."]

731. Avoid the use of a pronoun that seems to refer to a noun that has not been expressed. Remember that the pronoun cannot refer to an adjective or adverb or to the general idea of a phrase or clause. It must have a definite antecedent that is the name of a person, thing, action, or quality.

Wrong: Do not take the life out of your rugs by beating them. Let us do *it* in a more scientific way with our steam process.
Right: Do not take the life out of your rugs by beating them. Let us *clean* them in a more scientific way with our steam process.

Wrong: Without doubt, our new manager is strict, but *it* has not dominated him as *it* did the old manager.
Right: Without doubt, our new manager is strict, but *strictness* has not dominated him as *it* did the old manager.

NOTE.—In the sentence marked "wrong," the pronoun *it* is without an antecedent, because a pronoun may not refer grammatically to an adjective.

Faulty: The credit manager offered to increase his pay, but he refused *it*.
Better: The credit manager made an offer to increase his pay, but he refused *it*.

732. A pronoun cannot be used to refer to a clause.

Wrong: Your check for $117.85 was not received until Feb. 4, *which* means that we cannot allow you the discount.
Right: Your check for $117.85 was not received until Feb. 4. *This fact* means that we cannot allow you the discount.
[Or, better: As your check for $117.85 was not received until Feb. 4, we cannot allow you the discount.]

Wrong: His bank balance is low; *this* worries him.
Better: His bank balance is low; *this fact* worries him.
Still better: The fact that his bank balance is low worries him.

733. Avoid the use of a pronoun, or a pronominal expression, the antecedent of which is not immediately and clearly seen.

Not clear: The members of the firm have again taken up the matter with the two watchmen, for *they* now think that *they* know how the safe was tampered with.
Better: The members of the firm have again taken up the matter with the two watchmen, *who* now think that *they* know how the safe was tampered with.

Not clear: The bookkeeper took the letter away from George just because *he* wanted to answer it.
Better: The bookkeeper took the letter away from George just because *he himself* wanted to answer it.

734. Be particularly careful of the use of pronouns in indirect discourse.

Not clear: Jackson wrote to Mr. Ackens that *his* books showed that *he* must put up more margin or *he* would close *him* out.
Better: Jackson wrote to Mr. Ackens: "My books show that you must put up more margin or I shall close you out."

735. Do not use the pronoun until the antecedent has appeared, unless the antecedent immediately follows and is unmistakable.

Wrong: Sales letters are an important part of our selling campaign, but though *they* have steadily watched, and though *they* have studied hard, *sales letter writers* have been unable to lay down hard and fast rules for the success of this work.

NOTE.—In the above passage "they" is vague until near the end of the passage.

Not clear: These lamps ought to sell well, but though *they* have gone to many retailers and worked hard, *our salesmen* have had no success with them.

NOTE.—In this sentence *they* is vague in meaning until the reader has read as far as "salesmen."

736. Avoid the use of a pronoun in referring to a noun subordinate in thought or syntax; either repeat the noun or recast the sentence. The pronoun should not be used to refer to a noun that is not central in the reader's mind.

Not clear: In F. B. Scott & Company's new catalog for 1920, *they* give some remarkably low figures for hydraulic engines.

Better: F. B. Scott & Company, in *their* new catalog for 1920, give some remarkably low figures for hydraulic engines.

Still better: F. B. Scott & Company's new catalog for 1920 gives some remarkably low figures for hydraulic engines.

Not clear: This concern's net worth is so small that *it* cannot be considered.

Better: This concern cannot be considered because its net worth is so small.

Not clear: Inasmuch as the package was given to the customer's driver, *he* must stand the loss.

Better: Inasmuch as the package was given to the customer's driver, *the customer* must stand the loss.

737. Various ways of ridding the sentence of the ambiguity caused by the faulty use of pronouns are: The substitution of equivalent nouns and the unequivocal "the former" and "the latter"; the use of direct quotation in place of the indirect; and the repetition of a word or phrase. Do not be afraid, ever, to repeat the word to which the pronoun refers.

Not clear: Fred's boss came to town and *he* took him to luncheon.
Better: Fred's boss came to town and Fred took him to luncheon.

74

Pronouns—Agreement in Gender and Number

740. A pronoun must agree with its antecedent [the word to which it refers] in gender and number.

Wrong: The corporation has sent *their* check.
Wrong: The corporation has sent *his* check.
Right: The corporation has sent *its* check.

***741.** The pronoun *he*, not *he or she*, should usually be used to refer to an antecedent that may be either masculine or feminine.

Right: Everybody in the main factory was told that *he* must work overtime. [Not *he or she*.]
Right: Each one in this office must be at *his* desk by 9 A.M. [Not *his or her*.]
Right: Each man and woman was requested to give *his* opinion of the proposed bonus system. [Not *his or her*. See Rule 756, note 1.]
Right: Either Mr. Jordan or his wife must give us *his* word that *he* will pay more promptly.

NOTE.—In the preceding sentences, *his or her* may be used if the distinction in gender is important, as it is, for

*See Rule 705.

example, in legal writing. If *his* alone is used, it may be regarded as of common gender, or as of the generic masculine gender. It is often better to avoid the construction either by using a noun like *person*, which applies to both genders, or by recasting the sentence.

Every person in the office gave 5% of *his* weekly salary to the Red Cross.

Either Mr. Jordan or his wife must promise to pay the bills more promptly.

742. *Who*, not *which* [neuter gender], should be used to refer to persons.

Wrong: Only five customers *which* knew me refused to give me an order.

Right: Only five customers *who* knew me refused to give me an order.

Wrong: Every person with *which* I was acquainted gave me an order.

Right: Every person with *whom* I was acquainted gave me an order.

NOTE.—A neuter pronoun may be used to refer to a group of persons considered as an impersonal unit.

Right: The committee, *which* was composed of employees, met at 9 A.M.

Right: The jury made *its* decision without leaving the room.

Correct through usage: *Which* of the two men shall you choose?
Which of you counted the cash?

743. *Of which*, not *whose*, should be used, as a rule, to refer to things. [See Rule 710.]

Wrong: I again read the contract *whose* meaning was at first not clear to me.

Right: I again read the contract, the meaning *of which* was at first not clear to me.

744. *One, any one, everybody,* and similar words ordinarily require the masculine, singular pronoun.

Wrong: Every one in the office was asked *their* opinion.
Right: Every one in the office was asked *his* opinion. [As "every one," the antecedent of *his,* is singular, the pronoun must be singular.]

Wrong: Whenever I send the samples to anybody, I always ask *them* to return them.
Right: Whenever I send the samples to anybody, I always ask *him* to return them.

NOTE.—Some precise writers avoid the use of pronouns referring to these words. Instead of writing "One can only do his best" [which is correct], they prefer "One can only do one's best" [which is also correct but pedantic].

***745.** *None* may have either a singular or a plural pronoun referring to it, according as the idea is singular or plural.

Right: None of the men would sign *their* names to the petition.
Right: None of the men would sign *his* name to the petition.

NOTE.—In certain pieces of writing, such as advertisements and form letters, it may be advisable artfully to avoid the construction. Instead, use constructions similar to "*Not any* of the men would sign *their* names to the petition," and "*Not one* of the men would sign *his* name to the petition."

746. When a pronoun has two or more singular antecedents connected by *or* or *nor,* the pronoun must be in the singular number; but if one of the antecedents is plural, the pronoun must also be plural.

Wrong: Neither Anderson nor Kelly turned in *their* sales reports.
Right: Neither Anderson nor Kelly turned in *his* sales reports.

---

*See Rule 705.

Right: Neither Jordan nor his customers said that *they* had any fault to find with the goods.

Right: Either the manager or his two assistants will lose *their* positions.

747. When a pronoun has two or more antecedents connected by *and*, the pronoun is usually plural.

Right: Both Anderson and Kelly turned in *their* sales reports.

NOTE.—A few exceptions to the foregoing general rule are found in sentences that have compound subjects consisting of two or more singular sentences preceded by *each* or *every*. Such subjects are considered to be singular in number because the feeling of singularity is so strong. [See Rule 756, note 1.]

Right: Every man and boy in the office gave 5% of *his* [not *their*] weekly salary to the Red Cross.

748. When the antecedent of a pronoun is a collective noun, the pronoun is singular or plural according as the collective noun is considered singular or plural. [See Rule 755.]

Faulty: The ship's *crew* was ordered by the first mate to start *their* work.

Right: The ship's *crew* was ordered by the first mate to start *its* work.

Faulty: The track *gang* was paid off, one by one, and *it* was asked to report for work at 8 A.M., on Monday.

Right: The track *gang* were paid off, one by one, and *they* were asked to report for work at 8 A.M., on Monday.

75

Verbs—Agreement in Number and Person

750. Verbs have different forms for expressing the same meaning. These forms vary according as the sub-

ject is first, second, or third person and singular or plural. The verb must agree with the subject in person and number. A singular subject demands a singular verb; a plural subject demands a plural verb.

Wrong: Our latest *shipment* of automobiles *are* on exhibition at our show-rooms.
Right: Our latest *shipment* of automobiles *is* on exhibition at our show-rooms.

Wrong: *He don't* want to receive any more supplies.
Right: *He doesn't* want to receive any more supplies.

***751.** When other nouns or pronouns intervene between the subject and the verb, care should be taken to see that the verb agrees with the actual subject.

Wrong: *Johnson,* not you, *are* credited with making the sale.
Right: *Johnson,* not you, *is* credited with making the sale. [It is advisable to recast the sentence to read, "Johnson is credited with making the sale, not you."]

Wrong: Your regular *order,* as well as your special orders of March 8, *have* been shipped.
Right: Your regular *order,* as well as your special orders of March 8, *has* been shipped.

Wrong: A *letter,* together with a catalog, *were* mailed to you.
Right: A *letter,* together with a catalog, *was* mailed to you.

NOTE.—In the preceding examples, notice particularly the fact that a singular subject, although followed by a parenthetical or modifying phrase, takes a singular verb, because words joined to the subject by such expressions as *with, together with, in addition to,* or *as well as,* are not a part of the grammatical subject.

752. Where the subject follows the verb, care should be taken to preserve agreement.

* See Rule 705.

Wrong: There *was* many returns after the sale.
Right: There *were* many returns after the sale. [*Returns* is the subject and is plural; hence, the verb must be plural.]

Wrong: In this office *was* found the missing letters.
Right: In this office *were* found the missing letters. [*Letters* is the subject and is plural.]

***753.** A verb used with two or more singular subjects joined by *or*, *nor*, or *but* is singular.

Wrong: Either the shipping department *or* the railroad *are* at fault.
Right: Either the shipping department *or* the railroad *is* at fault.

Wrong: Neither Jones *nor* his partner *are* coming.
Right: Neither Jones *nor* his partner *is* coming.

Wrong: Not the manager *but* his assistant *are* responsible.
Right: Not the manager *but* his assistant *is* responsible.

***754.** A verb used with two or more subjects of different number joined by *or*, *nor*, or *but* is of the number of the nearer subject.

Wrong: Either they or he *were* interested in this concern.
Right: Either they or he *was* interested in this concern.

Wrong: Not the delays, but poor quality, *are* causing the trouble.
Right: Not the delays, but poor quality, *is* causing the trouble.

NOTE.—It is usually better to recast such sentences. Write, "Either they were interested in this concern, or he was." "The trouble is caused by poor quality, not by delays."

755. A collective noun, when it refers to the collection as a whole, is singular in sense and therefore requires a singular verb. When it refers to the individual persons or things of the collection, it is plural and requires a plural verb.

*See Rule 705.

Wrong: The committee as a whole *have* approved the purchase.
Right: The committee as a whole *has* approved the purchase.

Wrong: The Interstate Commerce Commission *have* decided against the railroads.
Right: The Interstate Commerce Commission *has* decided against the railroads.

Wrong: Ten thousand dollars *are* a large sum to us.
Right: Ten thousand dollars *is* a large sum to us.

Wrong: One hundred dollars *was* slowly counted out, one by one, by the cashier.
Right: One hundred dollars *were* slowly counted out, one by one, by the cashier.

NOTE 1.—Such substantives as *half*, *number*, *remainder*, *rest* take a singular or plural verb according as they are considered to refer to one whole or to the several members of a group.

Half of the car-load of potatoes *was* condemned by the inspector.
Half of the potatoes *were* rotten.
The number of strikers *grows* smaller each day.
A number of strikers *have* gone back to their work.

756. A verb used with a compound subject consisting of two or more members joined by *and* is regularly plural.

Right: The desk and the chair *were* shipped at the same time.

Wrong: Frank and I *am* going to see him this afternoon.
Right: Frank and I *are* going to see him this afternoon.

NOTE 1.—A verb used with a compound subject consisting of two or more singular members preceded by *each* or *every*, and joined by *and*, is singular. [See Rule 747, note.]

Wrong: Each man and woman *were* asked to cast one ballot.
Right: Each man and woman *was* asked to cast one ballot.

Wrong: Every instrument and blue-print *are* to be returned.
Right: Every instrument and blue-print *is* to be returned.

NOTE 2.—A compound subject designating a single person or object takes a singular verb.

Right: His son and heir *was* born in 1910.
Right: The Stars and Stripes *was* hoisted to the masthead.

Agreement in Person of Verbs

757. The person of a verb must be the same as that of the subject.

Wrong: One of you, Fred or you, *are* to be promoted.
Right: One of you, Fred or you, *is* to be promoted.

Wrong: I, his lawyer, *is* ready to start suit.
Right: I, his lawyer, *am* ready to start suit.

758. A verb used with two or more subjects of different person joined by *or*, *nor*, or *but* agrees in person with the nearer subject.

Wrong: Neither Mr. Reppert nor I *is* feeling well.
Right: Neither Mr. Reppert nor I *am* feeling well. [See Rule 753.]

Wrong: Not I but the shipping clerk *am* to blame.
Right: Not I but the shipping clerk *is* to blame.

759. When the subject of a clause is a relative pronoun, the person of the verb of the clause must be in agreement.

Wrong: He forwarded the goods to me, who *is* now acting as his agent.
Right: He forwarded the goods to me, who *am* now acting as his agent.

[*Who*, a relative pronoun, is the subject of the clause. As *who* refers to *me*, first person, singular, *who* is likewise first person, singular. Hence the form of the verb must be first person, singular.]

76

Verbs—Tense

760. The tense of a verb should accurately express the time of the action. Unless this rule is observed the reader will be likely to secure a different impression from the one intended. Care should be taken to use the present tense for any action occurring at the present time.

Wrong: We *shall be* glad to accept your invitation.
Right: We *are* glad to accept your invitation. [The acceptance and the gladness are of the present, though the invitation may be for some future date.]

761. The past tense is used to express an action belonging to a definite past time.

Correct: In the past year, they *made* four claims on account of damage to goods. [Not *have made.*]
You *were* absent three times last month. [Not *have been.*]

762. The perfect indicative represents the action either as recently completed or as begun in the past but continuing to the future.

Correct: I *have* just *sold* your bonds.
I *have known* him for years.

763. Distinguish carefully between the future tense, which simply indicates the expectation of future action, and the verb of volition which expresses the writer's determination of future action. The words *shall* and *will* are used for both, but in different ways. Following is the complete set of forms for simple futurity:

Futurity

I shall	We shall
You will	You will
He will	They will

Wrong: I *will* be glad to hear from you.
Right: I *shall* be glad to hear from you.
[It is absurd for one to say *that he is determined to be glad.*]

Right: They *will* be glad to receive your letter.

764. When the writer desires to express desire, willingness, or determination in direct declarations, he should use the following formula [These forms imply that the action is within the control of the speaker or writer]:

Volition

I will	We will
You shall	You shall
He shall	They shall

Correct: I certainly *will* not pay this bill.
He *shall* pay for that bill if I have anything to do with it.
You *shall* stay out of this territory, even though I have to get out an injunction.

["It *shall* rain to-morrow" is nonsense, as it means that the speaker or writer is determined to have it rain to-morrow.]

765. In questions, the use of *shall* and *will* is as follows:

a. When the subject is in the first person, *shall* is always used, except in repeating a question addressed to the speaker.

Right: *Shall* we continue to mail the information as it comes in?
Right: *Shall* I return the shipment?
Right: *Will* I let you have that discount? Why, surely I *will*. [*Will* shows desire on part of speaker.]

b. When the subject is in the second or third person, use the form that will be used in the answer.

Shall you arrive on the 8:20 train? [The answer expected is, "I *shall* arrive" or "I *shall not* arrive on the 8:20 train"; therefore, *shall* ought to be used in the question.]
Will he come, do you suppose? [The answer expected is,

"He *will* come" or "He *will not* come"; therefore, *will* ought to be used in the question.]

Will you lend me the money? [The answer expected is, "I *will*" or "I *will not* lend you the money"; therefore, *will* ought to be used in the question.]

766. *Should* and *would*, the past future forms of *shall* and *will*, are used in the same connection and sense as *shall* and *will*.

Other uses of *should* and *would* follow:

a. Would may be used to express frequentative action.

Right: He *would* pace the floor of his office, hour after hour.

b. Would is also used to express a wish.

Right: I *would* that I could help you in your difficulty.

c. Should is frequently used to express moral obligation.

Right: You *should* do your duty, no matter what it costs.

767. In indirect discourse, use the form of *shall* or *will* that would properly be used in the direct quotation.

Right: He wrote in his letter that he *should* probably arrive on the 8:20 train.

NOTE.—In the letter he actually wrote, "I *shall* [showing simple futurity] probably arrive on the 8:20 train"; therefore, *should* [an inflectional form of *shall*] is correctly used in the indirect quotation.

Right: You telegraphed that you *would* grant me the favor.

NOTE.—On the telegraph blank was actually written, "I *will* [showing willingness on the part of the writer] grant you the favor"; hence, *would* [an inflectional form of *will*] is correctly used in the indirect quotation.

768. The tense of the verb in a dependent clause varies with the tense of the principal verb. Maintain a harmony of tenses. Tenses of verbs within a sentence are usually

related to each other within a division of time: present, past, or future. The most important verb sets the standard of reference; other verbs must accurately express their time relation to that verb.

Right: I *know* that you *will* understand our position in this matter.
Right: I *knew* that you *would* understand our position in this matter.
Right: He *will be* greatly *pleased* if he *gets* this order.
Right: He *would be* greatly *pleased* if he *got* this order.
Right: He *would have been* greatly *pleased* if he *had got* this order.

NOTE 1.—Sometimes the tenses are in different divisions of time; if so, the problem is not to relate the tenses accurately within one division of time, but merely to express each time idea precisely.

They *will tell* us [future] what action they *took* [past].
We *hope* [present] that they *will* soon *pay* [future] their bill.
He *told* us [past] that the distance to the next town *is* [present] twenty-two miles.

NOTE 2.—General propositions or unchangeable truths, however, should be expressed in the present tense, regardless of the tense of the principal verb.

Right: He *explained* in his report that the mixture *is composed* of three chemicals. [Not *was composed.*]
Right: We *learned* from the time-table that the distance between the two cities *is* seventy-four miles. [Not *was.*]

77

Verbs—Subjunctive Mood

770. Mood is the form of the verb which indicates the manner in which the action or state is to be regarded. The indicative mood is generally used when the statement

is regarded as a fact or as a truth; the subjunctive, when the statement expresses uncertainty, or implies some degree of doubt.

771. The use of the subjunctive mood is preferred in wishes, conditions, etc., in which unreality is clearly implied or strongly suggested.

> If I *were* [rather than *was*] in your town, I should go to see you.
> I wish that I *were* [rather than *was*] able to dictate the policy of this concern.

NOTE.—In business letters it is well to avoid implying doubt where none is intended.

78

Verbs—Participles, Gerunds, Infinitives

780. Participles and gerunds are identical in form, but differ in case. Both end in *ing* for the present tense, and usually in *ed* for the past tense. The participle is a verbal adjective and always modifies some noun or pronoun; the action it expresses is merely a limiting circumstance. The gerund is a verbal noun and is connected with a noun or pronoun only by the use of a preposition or the possessive case; the action it expresses may be important enough to have attention focused on it.

> Participle: *Detecting* the forgery, the cashier refused to honor the check.
> Gerund: After *refusing* payment, the cashier notified the president.
> Gerund: His *detecting* the forgery undoubtedly prevented serious loss.

NOTE.—A noun or pronoun modifying a gerund should be in the possessive case.

> Wrong: We have just been informed of *him* being successful.
> Right: We have just been informed of *his* being successful.

Wrong: This can be done without *any one* noticing it.
Right: This can be done without *any one's* noticing it.

NOTE.—When the form in *-ing* is a participle, not a gerund, the substantive designating the doer of the action is correctly in the objective case.

Correct: Even now I can recall *him*, pacing up and down the office. ["Him" is the object of "recall." "Pacing" is a participle modifying "him." In the sentence, "Even now I can recall *his* pacing up and down the office," "his" modifies "pacing," the object of "recall."]

781. A participle should not introduce a sentence unless it logically modifies the subject of the principal verb.

Bad: *Replying* to your letter, the matter has been arranged satisfactorily.
Good: *Replying* to your letter, we should like to say that the matter has been arranged satisfactorily.

Wrong: *Walking* up the aisle, the woman's skirt was caught and torn by the corner of the counter.
Right: *Walking* up the aisle, the woman caught and tore her skirt on the corner of the counter.
Better: As the woman was walking up the aisle, she caught and tore her skirt on the corner of the counter.

782. The noun or pronoun which the participle modifies must be expressed in the sentence, and reference to it must be unmistakable.

Wrong: The morning was spent at the office *dictating* and *signing* letters.
Right: I spent the morning at the office, *dictating* and *signing* letters.

Ambiguous: The *agent* called on *me*, thoroughly *alarmed* by the recent developments.
Better: The *agent*, thoroughly *alarmed* by the recent developments, called on me. [Or,] When the agent called on me, he found me thoroughly alarmed by the recent developments.

783. Indicate unmistakably the agent of the action represented by the gerund. If the agent is not indicated by a substantive in immediate contact with the gerund, it must be indicated by the subject of the principal verb.

Wrong: After *having telephoned* to me that I should go ahead with his order, *I* received his cancelation.
Right: After *having telephoned* to me that I should go ahead with his order, *he* sent me his cancelation.

Wrong: In *talking over* with the new manager plans for the coming year, *he* told me that an advertising campaign would soon start.
Right: In *talking over* with the new manager plans for the coming year, *I* was told that an advertising campaign would soon start.
Better: In *talking over* with me plans for the coming year, *the new manager* told me that an advertising campaign would soon start.

784. The present participle should not be used to represent an action that is not simultaneous with that of the principal verb.

Wrong: *Leaving* here on May 25, he reached Providence on May 28.
Right: He left here on May 25 and reached Providence on May 28.

Wrong: He sailed for Liverpool on June 8, *arriving* there on the 16th.
Right: He sailed for Liverpool on June 8 and *arrived* there on the 16th.

Right: *Replying* to your letter, we wish to say that our salesmen will see you on Monday.

785. If a gerund represents a definite action relating to some object which cannot take the possessive case

[see Rules 710 and 780, note], use the preposition *of* with the name of the object.

> The *detecting of the forgery* saved considerable loss. [*The detecting the forgery* is incorrect.]

786. Indicate unmistakably the agent of the action expressed by an infinitive. If the agent is not indicated by a substantive in immediate contact with the infinitive, it must be indicated by the subject of the principal verb.

> Wrong: The information in the rating books was insufficient *to determine* the amount of credit he should receive.
> Better: The information in the rating books was insufficient to enable *us to determine* the amount of credit he should receive.
> Preferable: *We* were unable *to determine* the amount of credit he should receive, because the information in the rating books was insufficient.

787. The perfect infinitive is used to denote action prior to that of the principal verb; otherwise, use the present infinitive. Be careful to see that the infinitives and conditional verb phrases are not incorrectly attracted into the perfect tense.

> Wrong: He meant *to have written* yesterday.
> Right: He meant *to write* yesterday.
>
> ———
>
> Wrong: He expected *to have seen* you to-morrow.
> Right: He expected *to see* you to-morrow.
>
> ———
>
> Right: He was reported *to have sold* out.
> Right: He is known *to have had* financial difficulties.

NOTE.—*Ought*, *need*, *must*, and *should* (in the sense of *ought*) have no distinctive form to denote past time. Present time is denoted by putting the complementary infinitive into the present tense; past time is denoted by putting the complementary infinitive into the perfect

tense, as in "You ought *to write*," "You ought *to have written*," "You *should be* careful," "You *should have been* careful."

79

Adjectives and Adverbs

790. Distinguish carefully between adjectives and adverbs of similar form. Adjectives ending in *ly* [the typical ending of adverbs] are fruitful sources of error.

Wrong: He plays lovely.
Right: He plays beautifully.

Wrong: I shall likely go.
Right: I shall probably go.
Right: It is likely that I shall go.

791. After *look*, *sound*, *taste*, *smell*, *feel*, and similar verbs, an adjective is often used to describe the subject.

Right: These vases look *beautiful*. [Not "look *beautifully*."]
Right: Pinaud's perfume smells *exquisite*. [Not "smells *exquisitely*."]
Right: How *good* the Victrola sounds on the porch! [Not "sounds *well*."]
Right: I feel *well*. ["Well" is an adjective in this use.]
Right: It feels *good* to get back to my office.
Right: We stand *firm* in our conviction.
Right: The bonds you mailed reached us *safe*.
Right: He got across *safe*.

NOTE.—As a rule the adjective is used whenever some form of the verb *to be* or *to seem* may be substituted; when no such substitution can be made, the adverb is used. In "We stand *firm* in our conviction," the verb "are" may be substituted for "stand" with little change in the meaning. But in "We stand *firmly* by our decision," the verb "are" cannot be substituted for "stand" without changing the meaning of the sentence. Compare "He looks *angry*" with "He looks *angrily* at me."

792. In such expressions as, *He rolled it tight, He rolled it tightly, We kept it safe, We kept it safely,* the modifier should be an adjective if it designates the condition of the object; if it designates the manner of action of the verb, the modifier should be an adverb.

Right: He rolled it *tight.* [*Tight* designates the condition of the object.]
Right: He rolled it *tightly.* [*Tightly* designates the manner of rolling.]
Right: We kept it *safe.* [*Safe* designates the condition of the object.
Right: We kept it *safely.* [*Safely* designates the manner of keeping.]

793. Such words as *sort, kind,* and *type* should be preceded by the singular demonstrative adjective and not by the plural.

Wrong: *These kind* of letters seldom bring results.
Right: *This kind* of letter seldom brings results.

Wrong: We don't want *those sort* of customers.
Right: We don't want *that sort* of customer.

NOTE.—The use of a singular or plural noun after *sort of,* etc., is determined by whether the writer thinks of the whole class or of its individual members.

794. The indefinite article, *a, an,* should not be inserted in a phrase that depends upon *kind, sort, type,* etc.

Wrong: That *kind of a* letter seldom brings results.
Right: That *kind of* letter seldom brings results.

Wrong: He is the *kind of a* man that always delays paying his bills.
Right: He is the *kind of* man that always delays paying his bills.

795. Use the comparative [not the superlative] degree of an adjective in comparing two objects.

Who is the *stronger* [not *strongest*], Barton or Cameron?
Johnson is the *younger* [not *youngest*] of the two.

796. Use only one negative word to express a single negative idea.

Wrong: We *haven't no more* No. 3 wheels on hand.
Right: We *haven't any more* No. 3 wheels on hand.

Wrong: The treasurer *never* goes over the books; *not* even for his own information.
Right: The treasurer *never* goes over the books; *even* for his own information.

Wrong: He *doesn't* want to give us the information, *nor* to help us in any manner.
Right: He *doesn't* want to give us the information, *or* to help us in any manner.

Wrong: Roberts & Co. *haven't scarcely* any stock on their shelves.
Right: Roberts & Co. *have scarcely* any stock on their shelves.

Chapter VIII

Punctuation and Capitals

80

The Functions of Punctuation and Capitals

800. Punctuation and capitalization are used in written messages to serve the same purposes that pauses and vocal inflections serve in spoken messages. They enable the reader to grasp the thought more easily and surely. Some mark of punctuation is generally required in a letter or other composition wherever the separation of ideas is such that a pause would naturally be made in reading aloud. There are several degrees of separation and therefore several different marks are required.

801. The comma (,) indicates the smallest degree of separation. It suggests that the thought is still unfinished and that the words which follow are closely related with those which precede.

802. The semicolon (;) indicates a wider degree of separation, usually a separation between clauses.

803. The colon (:) indicates a still wider degree of separation and suggests that what follows is equivalent in some way to what precedes.

804. The period (.) is the widest mark of separation and indicates that a thought has been completed.

805. The exclamation point (!) and question mark (?) are usually indicative of completed thought and simply stamp its character as an exclamation or question.

806. The dash (—) indicates abruptness of change from one idea or part of an idea to another.

807. Parentheses ( ) indicate that the material within them is merely explanatory and might have been omitted. If read aloud, this material would probably be spoken as an aside. Brackets [ ] are similar, but indicate that the material within is independent of the rest of the sentence or is supplied by some one other than the writer of the rest of the passage, as, for example, an editor.

808. Quotation marks (" ") indicate that the material within them contains the exact words of some speaker or writer, whether he is specifically named or not. Single quotation marks (' ') are used to inclose a speech within a speech.

809. The apostrophe (') usually indicates an omission of letters.

81

Arbitrary Uses of Punctuation

810. As in all other matters of English composition, the use of punctuation marks is governed partly by logic and partly by established usage. Many rules of punctuation are purely arbitrary and are the result merely of general acceptance.

811. After abbreviations that are not contractions, use the period. [See Rule 899]

Right: The Ass'n and the Co. are agreed on Mr. John Brown, M. E., as Sec'y and Treas.

NOTE.—If the abbreviation is formed by the omission of letters and the apostrophe is used to indicate the omission, the period at the end is unnecessary.

812. Between the hours and minutes indicating exact time, use the colon.

Right: Your train leaves at 9:45.

813. To indicate the omission of letters in a word, as in an abbreviation, use the apostrophe.

Right: We can't join the Eastern Ass'n.

NOTE.—The apostrophe in forming possessives really indicates an omission. "John's book" is a contraction of "John, his book."

814. To indicate the omission of words that can easily be supplied by the reader (called an ellipsis), use the comma.

Right: Price, $2.50.
Right: Some of the boxes were shipped yesterday; the rest, to-day.

815. To indicate the omission of words that cannot be supplied by the reader, and that are not considered relevant or necessary to his understanding of the passage, use a line of dots (periods).

Right: He reported: "There is no advantage in ordering fuel . . . at present prices."

816. To separate long numbers for quick and easy comprehension, use commas to divide the figures into groups of threes. The division begins at the end of the number, or at the decimal point, if there is one, and proceeds to the left.

Right: 84,107,932
Right: $73,666.67

817. To join numbers indicating the extremes of a series that includes all intervening members, use the dash.

Right: 1914–1918 (This indicates a period of time beginning in 1914, proceeding through 1915, 1916, and 1917, and ending in 1918.)
Right: Chapters VII–XII.

818. To indicate the plural of figures, letters, signs, etc., use the apostrophe.

Right: He had only three 5's on his card.
Right: Cross your t's and dot your i's.

819. After the salutation of a letter, use the colon or comma.

Right: Dear Sir:
Dear John,

82

Separations of Small Units

820. To bring out clearly the meaning of a passage by separating the smaller units, such as words and short phrases, the comma is ordinarily used.

821. After each of a series of words or phrases in the same construction, unless they are all connected by conjunctions, use a comma.

Right: The colors are red, white, and blue.

NOTE.—The comma is sometimes omitted between the last two members of the series when the conjunction *and* is used, but the safer practice is to insert it. For example, in such a series as "Omelettes: plain, jelly, ham, Spanish, onion and cheese," it is easy to misinterpret the last-named varieties as a single combination. A comma after the word "onion" prevents this mistake.

822. Between the members of a series of adjectives or adverbs that are coördinate in construction, equal in value, and not connected by conjunctions, use commas.

Right: She is a willing, steady worker.
Right: We have shipped a large open boat.

[Here the adjectives are not coördinate in thought; "open" modifies "boat"; "large" further modifies the general term "open boat."]

Right: Send me a sample of pure white Castile soap.

[Each of these adjectives limits to a smaller group the general group indicated by all the words that follow.]

NOTE.—To determine whether adjectives or adverbs are coördinate and equal, see if their order might properly be changed, and if they might properly be connected by the conjunction "and."

823. To set off a noun used in apposition with, or in explanation of, another noun or pronoun, use commas.

Right: You will understand, Mr. Fall, that we have done our best in this matter.
Right: He stayed at our headquarters, the Hotel Astor.

824. To separate the elements of a date or address, use the comma.

Right: Springfield, Mass.
Right: January 12, 1920.

NOTE.—In England it is customary to set off the name of the month from the number of the day, as "January, 12, 1920."

825. To set off from the rest of the sentence any connective that breaks the continuity of thought, especially the adverbs, *however*, *too*, *perhaps*, and *indeed*, use commas.

Right: Your first letter, however, has not reached us.

NOTE.—The ordinary conjunctives at the beginning of the sentence do not require to be set off in this way.

826. To set off a descriptive or explanatory participial phrase, or any absolute participial phrase, use commas.

Right: Denying that he was responsible for the loss, he refused to pay.
Right: Our factory being oversold, we are unable to accept your order.

827. To separate from the context any quoted word or short phrase, use quotation marks only. [But see Rule 836.]

Right: We introduce no "cut and dried" system.
Right: Distinguish between "affect" and "effect."

828. To separate from the context any short quotation introduced directly but informally as the words of a speaker, use commas with the quotation marks. [But see Rule 836.]

Right: When we read in his letter, "I shall be sure to send this on Friday," we awaited his message.

NOTE.—For long quotations formally introduced see Rule 859.

829. Use a comma to separate any two sentence elements that might be misunderstood if read together.

Wrong: Ever since we have refused to do business with them.
Right: Ever since, we have refused to do business with them.

Right: I tell you, you are hurting only yourself by your attitude.
Right: We have done this, not because it is our policy, but because this is an exceptional case.
Right: You should have taken his point of view, not your own.

83

Separations of Sentences

830. The sentence is the unit of thought, and it is important that the punctuation indicate clearly the completeness and the character of each of these units. Failure to recognize the distinction between a complete and an incomplete thought results in some of the worst faults of composition. [See Rules 435 and 436.]

831. After every complete declarative sentence use a period.

Right: This work will have my personal supervision.

832. After every complete interrogatory sentence use the question mark.

Right: How many men have you interviewed to-day?

NOTE.—After the rhetorical question or "question of courtesy," which is really a request, a period is used, instead of a question mark.

Right: Will you kindly take care of this for us at your early convenience.

833. After every complete exclamatory sentence use an exclamation mark.

Right: What a mistake that was!

834. Exclamations are not always grammatically complete. If a fragmentary thought is intended to stand alone, it is usually best to consider it as an exclamation and use the exclamation mark.

Right: Twenty dollars! And for that! Profiteering, pure and simple!

835. A complete sentence or independent clause interpolated in a sentence by way of explanation should be set off by marks of parenthesis. [See also Rule 863.]

Right: The more you smoke our mixture (you will soon find this out), the more you will like it.

836. A question or exclamation within a sentence, whether directly quoted or parenthetical, retains at the end the same mark of punctuation it would have if it stood alone.

Right: When he inquired, "How soon can you make delivery?" I immediately wired our factory.
Right: His continual promises (Bad luck to him!) have been continually broken.
Right: The question, How can we do it? still remains to be answered.

NOTE.—A declarative sentence, when quoted within a sentence, has a comma at the end instead of a period. A declarative sentence in marks of parenthesis usually has no other punctuation at the end.

Right: When he said, "I am prepared to undertake the job," I handed over the contract (this was according to your own instructions) and he signed it.

837. An indirect quotation of a question or exclamation does not retain the original mark.

Wrong: He asked whether this could be done?
Right: He asked whether this could be done.
Right: He asked, "Can this be done?"

84

Relationships within Complex Sentences

840. The punctuation to be used between dependent and independent clauses within the sentence depends partly upon the order of the parts and partly upon the closeness of their relationship. In general, no punctuation is required if the parts are in normal order and the re-

lationship is very close. Inversions of order and looseness of relationship are usually indicated by the comma, or in the case of extreme length and complexity, by the semicolon.

841. A short dependent clause directly following its independent clause and closely connected with it is not separated from it by any punctuation mark.

Right: His plan received general approval although it was still incomplete.

NOTE.—In case either clause is extremely long, the comma may be used to separate them.

842. A dependent clause preceding its independent clause is separated from it by a comma.

Right: Although his plan was incomplete, it received general approval.

843. A dependent clause which breaks the continuity of the independent clause is set off from it by commas.

Right: His plan, although it was still incomplete, received general approval.

844. A non-restrictive relative clause introduced by *who, which, that,* and similar pronouns, is separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.

Right: Louis, who has been with us only two years, is our best salesman.

845. A restrictive clause is not separated from the rest of the sentence.

Right: An investment which nets about 4% is what I am looking for.

NOTE 1.—The following test may be used to decide whether a given clause or phrase is restrictive or non-restrictive. If the main assertion in the sentence remains

unchanged in meaning and can stand alone when the clause or phrase is omitted, the clause or phrase is non-restrictive. If the main assertion of the sentence is incomplete and cannot stand alone in meaning unless the clause or phrase be present, the clause or phrase is restrictive. In the sentence, "Louis, who has been with us only two years, is our best salesman," the clause "who has been with us only two years" may be omitted and the main assertion is unaffected, namely, "Louis is our best salesman." But in the sentence "An investment which nets about 4% is what I am looking for," the clause "which nets about 4%" cannot be omitted from the sentence, for then the sentence would read, "An investment is what I am looking for," which does not give the real meaning. In this latter case, therefore, the clause is restrictive.

NOTE 2.—*That* almost invariably indicates a restrictive clause. *Who* and *which* may indicate either a restrictive or a non-restrictive clause.

846. A dependent clause that is essential for the completeness of the grammatical construction or the idea of the principal clause is not separated from it.

Wrong: I said, that I would go.
Right: I said that I would go.

85

Relationships in Compound Sentences

850. Punctuation between the independent clauses of a compound sentence is largely a matter of judgment. It depends on the length and complexity of the parts and the character and clearness of their relationship. The

comma is frequently employed, but in case this is not sufficient to indicate the degree of separation, the semicolon or colon may be needed.

851. Two short independent clauses connected by one of the simple conjunctions, such as *and*, *but*, *or*, and *for*, are separated by the comma.

Right: We are entitled to this privilege, for we have maintained an average balance of $500.

NOTE.—No comma is usually needed between two parallel predicates having the same subject or between two very short clauses.

Right: We are entitled to this discount and intend to have it.
Right: You want it and you shall have it.

852. Two independent clauses not connected by any conjunction usually require some other mark than the comma. Violation of this rule is known as the "comma fault." [See Rule 436.] The only exception is the case of a series of short independent clauses, parallel in form, and closely connected in idea.

Right: He wrote, he telephoned, he telegraphed.

853. Two independent clauses that are coördinate or contrasted in idea, but are not connected by a conjunction, are usually separated by a semicolon.

Right: Ten years from now this machine will not be in the scrap-heap; it will be running as smoothly and silently as it is to-day.

854. Two independent clauses joined by one of the weaker or less common connectives, such as *accordingly*, *besides*, *hence*, *however*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*, *so*, *still*, *then*, *therefore*, *thus*, and the like, are separated by a semicolon.

Wrong: This camera is made of aluminum, therefore it is very light.

Right: This camera is made of aluminum; therefore it is very light.

Wrong: You see, the motor had too much oil, then it heated up and smoked like a volcano.

Right: You see, the motor had too much oil; then it heated up and smoked like a volcano.

855. Two independent clauses that are long or complex, and contain commas themselves, are usually separated by the semicolon, even when joined by *and* and *but*.

Right: Although every precaution was taken to pack the goods carefully, they suffered considerable damage, with resulting loss to us; and unfortunately this state of affairs seems likely to continue indefinitely.

856. Any two clauses or other elements of a complex or compound sentence may be separated by semicolons, when commas would not make their relationship clear.

Right: We have been informed that he has refused to honor his draft; that he has paid none of his bills, although heretofore he has borne a good reputation in this respect; and that his bank account is greatly depleted.

Wrong: If we had your territory, we should sell this product to every banker, and merchant, and nobody would escape us.

Right: If we had your territory, we should sell this product to every banker and merchant; and nobody would escape us.

857. Between two independent clauses that are substantially equal in idea and that are not joined by any conjunction, the colon is used. This rule covers the many cases in which the first clause clearly anticipates and points to the idea of the second.

Right: A man is judged by the company he keeps: to be included in this list is in itself a proof of merit.

Right: There can be only one reason for his silence: he is unable to answer.

858. Any series of clauses, group of ideas, or enumeration that is connected with the preceding part of the sentence by such expressions as *namely, that is, i. e.*, or the like, is set off by the colon. This rule holds good in cases where the connective is not expressed, but is understood, as is usual when the preceding clause ends "as follows." [The rule does not apply to cases where a single clause follows the connective; in such cases use the semicolon. See Rule 855.]

Right: Up to the present time, we have opened five new accounts: namely, the Johnson Company, The Smith Company, The White Company, The Jones Company, and the Stone-Black Company.

Right: The functions of modern industry may be divided into four parts, as follows: producing, marketing, financing, accounting.

NOTE.—An enumeration following the colon may be very long and consist of several sentences or even paragraphs. Wherever each item can be written as a clause or sentence it is preferable to make a separate paragraph of each one, and to separate them by semicolons. The last one, of course, ends with a period.

Right: In arranging the typography of a page the following points should be kept in mind:

First, see that the type matter is centered slightly above the mathematical center;

Second, see that the margins are ample, with the widest margin at the bottom and the next widest at the top;

Third, see that the type is easy to read, and that the lines are not more than four and one-half inches long.

859. After a word, phrase, or clause that introduces a long quotation, especially one that contains more than one sentence, use the colon.

I quote from his report: "There is great need of standardization in our letters. In one day's mail, fourteen different styles of make-up were discovered. Many of these were correct, but a few were sadly defective."

NOTE.—Even a short quotation at the end of a sentence may be preceded by a colon if the introduction is formal.

Right: These were his exact words: "It will cost at least two millions."

86

Punctuation for Emphasis

860. As emphasis may be given to spoken words by pauses, so also is it possible to emphasize various elements of written language by proper punctuation. Usually emphasis may be secured by using a mark that indicates wider separation than is required merely to make the meaning clear.

861. Two independent clauses connected by *and*, *but*, or one of the other common conjunctions may be emphasized by using the semicolon instead of the comma for separation. [See Rule 851.]

Right: The books have been audited; but the error has not been found.

862. For extreme emphasis two independent clauses, whether connected by conjunctions or not, can be isolated and written as two separate sentences. The period here marks the widest possible degree of separation.

Right: He promised prompt delivery. But I did not believe him.

863. Parenthetical phrases or clauses, ordinarily set off by commas or parentheses, may be set off by dashes

for greater emphasis. [This device is frequently overworked.]

Right: The more you smoke our mixture—you will soon find this out—the more you will like it. [Compare Rule 835.]
Right: The checking device—our new feature—adds much to its efficiency.

864. In place of the comma in any of its functions the dash may be used to secure abruptness of effect and thereby emphasize the ideas.

Right: Down—down—down have gone our prices. [Contrast the effect of "Down, down, down have gone our prices," and "Down! Down! Down have gone our prices!"]

865. To secure a pause before an important word, especially at the end of a sentence, a dash may be used, even though no mark of punctuation is ordinarily required there.

Right: The secret of our success is—service.

866. At the end of an unfinished statement, whether grammatically complete or not, a dash may be used to suggest to the reader the fact that he is expected to supply the rest of the idea himself.

Right: It's an ill wind—
Right: And as for the price—

867. In an indirect quotation, quotation marks are not required, but may be used to emphasize the fact that the exact words of a speaker are repeated. Care should be taken not to place within the quotation marks any words not actually used by the speaker.

Wrong: One user says "that his maintenance cost was less than ten dollars for two years."
Right: One user says, "My maintenance cost was less than ten dollars for two years."

Right: One user says that his maintenance cost was less than ten dollars for two years.

Right (more emphatic): One user says that his maintenance cost was "less than ten dollars for two years."

868. Long quotations, covering more than one paragraph, should have quotation marks at the beginning and end of the whole quotation and also at the *beginning* of every paragraph. This method emphasizes the fact that the quotation is continued. Formerly it was the custom to repeat the quotation marks at the beginning of each line, but such emphasis is rarely needed and the practice is no longer common except in messages of legal or quasi-legal character.

Right: Lord & Thomas say:

"I have wanted to write you for some time in appreciation of your data service. I find it of threefold value: first, in saving much time; second, in bringing to my attention the work of many bright minds; third, in providing a ready reference on numerous trade, advertising, and economic subjects. We keep a permanent file of your bulletins and index cards, and can always call on our librarian for helpful data bearing on the subject that we are looking for.

"I congratulate you on the success you are having."

869. Brackets are used in the same manner as parentheses, but emphasize the fact that the material inclosed was inserted by some one other than the author of the rest of the passage. In business messages they are most commonly used in quotations to explain some matter which might otherwise be obscure.

Right: This was your promise: "Next month [September] I will surely send you a check."

NOTE.—The comparatively rare use of brackets in business messages is evidenced by the fact that many typewriters do not have these marks.

87

Capitalization

870. Capital letters are an important device for securing emphasis. By their size and contrast to the small letters, they help to call attention to ideas and words which are regarded as important. Usage has established certain rules of capitalization, but there is still room for the exercise of personal judgment. As with all other means of emphasis, the value of capitals lies in using them sparingly; too much emphasis results in no emphasis. The tendency of modern business English is expressed by the general rule: When in doubt do not capitalize.

871. Capitalize the first word of every sentence, of every complete direct quotation, of every line of poetry, and of every paragraph (even though the paragraph consists of a clause).

Right: The manager wired, "We cannot obtain the sugar."
Right: "You will see," he asserted, "a great change."
[The second part of an interrupted quotation does not have a capital unless it is a word that would be capitalized in any case.]

NOTE.—In formal resolutions capitalize *Whereas*, *Resolved*, and the word immediately following each one, as well as the first word of every paragraph. (Formal resolutions are usually composed in a single sentence, though they may occupy pages.)

872. Capitalize every important word in the title of a book, article, periodical, or the like.

Right: Imagination in Business; At the Sign of the Dollar; the Saturday Evening Post; the Chicago Tribune; The Man Who Was.

NOTE.—*The* is not considered a part of the title, in the case of most periodicals.

873. Capitalize all proper names, including nicknames, and all words derived from them.

Right: England, English, Paris, Parisienne, James, Cecil Rhodes, Northcliffe, Dixie Flyer, Elizabethan, Maid of Athens, Old Man Eloquent.

NOTE 1.—Derivations that have lost their suggestion of the individual person or thing are not capitalized. For example: china (dishes), dahlia, pasteurize, boycott.

NOTE 2.—Foreign names like de Maupassant, Van Dyke, van Dyke, von Liebig, Le Sage, etc., should be capitalized according to the practice of the one who bears the name, provided his practice is ascertainable. His precedent is particularly important in addressing letters to him. Arbitrary rules should not stand in the way of proper courtesy. In general, however, all prepositions except *von* may be capitalized when *not* preceded by a forename, initials or title. When so preceded only *La*, *Le*, and *Van* are usually capitalized.

874. Capitalize all titles of office or distinction when used with a proper name.

Right: Governor Coolidge, Sir Thomas Lipton, Colonel Scott, Senator Underwood, Lord Byron, Dean Joseph French Johnson, LL.D.

875. Capitalize names of oceans, rivers, streets, churches, hotels, and similar things having an individuality that can be identified. Do not capitalize the general word standing for a class of objects.

Right: Atlantic Ocean, Hudson River, Fifth Avenue, Wall Street, Hotel Astor, St. Paul's Cathedral, Rotary Club,

League of Nations, Treaty of Versailles, the Republican Party, the Sixteenth Amendment.

Right: Upon the river, across the street, going to church, at his club, offered an amendment, the republican form of government.

NOTE.—In the case of geographical names the modern tendency is to capitalize only the specific name. For example: Fifth avenue, Hudson river, Wall st.

876. Capitalize the names of months and days. Capitalize the names of seasons when referring to a specific season, but not when referring to the season in general. Capitalize points of the compass when referring to specific sections, but not when referring to directions.

Right: We started north on the first Monday in March.
Right: In the South the winter is mild.
Right: Our worst season was the Winter of 1918.

877. Capitalize a general name, such as those included in Rule 875, when it refers definitely to a specific individual, even though that individual is not named.

Right: The King is dead. Long live the King.
[But: A cat may look at a king.]
Right: He made his money on the Street [Wall Street].
Right: Just off the Avenue [Fifth Avenue].
Right: The President favors this amendment.

878. Capitalize names of the Deity, and personal pronouns referring to the Deity unless the name immediately precedes.

Right: The Lord be praised.
Right: Praised be His name.

NOTE.—Here also distinguish between names of the individual and names of the general class. For example: "The Pilgrims worshiped God. Their descendants have been accused of worshiping the god of commercialism."

879. Capitalize any common noun used by personification as a proper name.

Right: Our people are ruled by Selfishness.

88

Tone as Affected by Punctuation

880. Although marks of punctuation are purely mechanical symbols, they may often be used to change the tone of a single word or whole passage and thus influence the impression made upon the reader.

881. The question mark inclosed in parentheses suggests doubt as to the accuracy of the preceding word.

The company was founded in 1852 (?) and moved to Chicago in 1866.

This token of respect (?) was received in silence.

882. The exclamation mark inclosed in parentheses suggests irony.

This token of respect (!) was received in silence.

883. To secure the suggestion of haste or urgency, a series of short sentences may be run together, separated only by dashes instead of periods.

Don't miss this chance—to-morrow may be too late—decide now—sign the card and mail it.

884. To secure the effect of deliberateness, a word or phrase may be spaced out with hyphens.

Consider this question s-l-o-w-l-y a-n-d c-a-r-e-f-u-l-l-y.

885. To give the effect of novelty and flippancy, a series of related words may be compounded by the use of hyphens.

This is a cross-my-heart once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

886. To lay stress upon a word that is not otherwise emphasized, underlining may be used.

We will let you be the judge.

887. Stress may be increased by setting a word entirely in capitals.

We will let YOU be the judge.

89

Good Style in Punctuation

890. Punctuation is largely a matter of judgment, but a writer should be consistent in his practice. He should also avoid tendencies which are contrary to those of general usage. The present tendency is toward a loose system in which marks are used as little as possible.

891. Too little punctuation is dangerous because it may result in obscurity or ambiguity.

892. Too much punctuation, on the other hand, may conceal the idea and retard the reader's progress. The safe principle is to avoid using a mark unless it clarifies or reinforces the idea.

893. Double punctuation, such as the comma with the dash (,—), is generally to be avoided. The period that indicates an abbreviation, however, may be used with any other mark, but not with another period.

894. With quotation marks other marks may be used. Even here, however, only one other mark should accompany the quotation marks. The position of this depends on whether it belongs to the quoted material only or to the sentence as a whole. A period or comma

always goes within the quotes; other marks go outside unless they properly belong to the quoted material.

Right: Don't say "ain't"; the correct form is "am not."

Wrong: He wrote, "Where did you get that"?
Right: He wrote, "Where did you get that?"

Wrong: Did you say, "Ship at once?"
Right: Did you say, "Ship at once"?

Wrong: Did he write, "We accept."?
Right: Did he write, "We accept"?

Wrong: We removed the sign, "Fire Sale!", and then left.
Right: We removed the sign, "Fire Sale!" and then left.

895. Marks of punctuation, with the exception of quotation marks, should never come at the beginning of a line; they belong with the preceding words at the end of the preceding line. This rule holds with the hyphen, used at the end of a line when a word has to be broken.

896. Periods are unnecessary after numerals, whether Roman or Arabic.

Right: In Chapter XX, page 37, the author discusses this question.

897. Commas are unnecessary at the ends of the lines composing an inside address or envelope superscription, although the more conservative practice is to include them there. The tendency in business, however, is to omit punctuation where separations are made by other means.

898. Hyphens are now omitted from many words formerly regarded as compounds.

Goodby, warlike, semiannual.

899. Apostrophes are properly omitted from abbreviations that have become recognized as such and have been established by usage.

Mr., Messrs., Jr., Ky.

NOTE.—No apostrophe is required in any abbreviation that is merely a contraction of a word with no letters omitted from the part that remains. When an apostrophe is used in any abbreviation, it should be placed where the letters were omitted. For example, *advertisement* is abbreviated to *ad.* or to *adv't*, not *ad'vt; association*, to *ass'n*, not *as'sn*.

Chapter IX

The Mechanical Display of the Letter

90

General Considerations of Display

900. The physical appearance of a letter makes its impression upon the receiver before he becomes a reader. If that first impression is favorable, it helps the chances of securing favorable response. If the first impression repels, the writer is handicapped in his efforts to deliver his message in words. Hence, it pays to give careful attention to the display of the letter—the details of mechanical make-up that are responsible for its appearance.

901. Usage has prescribed that the business letter shall contain, in addition to the body of the written message, a heading, an inside address (or superscription), a salutation, a complimentary close, and a signature.

902. In determining the form and arrangement of these and all other elements of the display, the first consideration is correctness. The externals of a letter, like the dress of a person, must conform to custom, or style—the usage of the leading business houses. Eccentricity calls attention to itself, and away from the message. The frame of the letter must never detract from the force of the letter itself. If two or more forms are equally correct, the more convenient should be chosen. If the

is no difference in this respect, the more artistic or pleasing form should have the preference. Originality in form is the last and least important consideration. There is ample room for originality in the body of the letter.

903. Large business houses recognize the possibilities of the good appearance of their letters as an aid in developing good-will. They know that in order to secure the best effect, it is necessary to have their letters standardized in mechanical display. If such matters are left to the discretion of the individual dictator or typist, there are sure to be certain inconsistencies and variations in form that detract from the effectiveness of the impression. The one most suitable style of make-up should be chosen as a standard and used uniformly throughout the correspondence.

904. Many business houses have devised an editorial manual for the use of all their correspondents and typists. Where such a manual is lacking this Handbook can be used for the purpose. From two alternative forms allowed by the Handbook, the supervisor or head correspondent may indicate which has his preference.

905. The paper for an ordinary business letter should be unruled, $8\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 inches, and preferably white in color. This fits the standard envelope, $6\frac{1}{2}$ x $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Bond papers are almost universally used. The quality should be as good as can be afforded, and certainly good enough to represent the character of the firm. For correspondence between departments within a business house, cheaper paper may be used. Often colored paper is preferred here in order to show from what department a letter comes or what subject is dealt with.

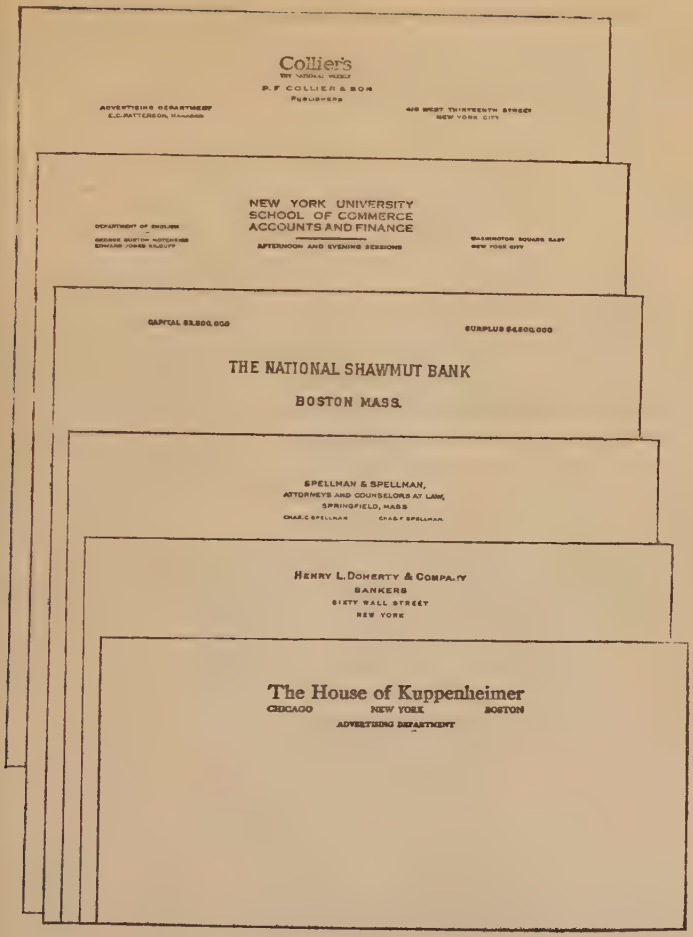
906. In some instances, the size, quality, and color of the paper may vary from these general standards

because of the class of readers addressed. Here, as elsewhere, adaptation to the reader is an important principle. Letters to women, for example, may be on note-paper sized stationery, considerably smaller than the usual 8½ x 11 sheet. It should be of excellent quality. Colored paper of cheaper quality is sometimes used with less educated people, especially where the argument of the letter is one of economy.

907. The business letterhead gives the name of the firm, its address, the nature of the business, and sometimes the names of the officers. It may also contain the telephone number and other essential information. It should never contain unessential facts, since the heading is not the important part of the letter and should not be made obtrusive by colored pictures of the products or buildings of the firm, and long lists of directors. The simpler the letterhead, the better chance has the message in the body of the letter to secure the undivided attention of the reader. It should not occupy more than one-fifth of the sheet and should not extend down the margins for advertising purposes.

NOTE.—Pictorial letterheads may be used for sales letters, provided the class of readers addressed is favorably disposed toward them. Most business houses, however, prefer for this purpose the four-page sheet, with the letter in dignified form on the first page, and the pictorial matter inside.

908. Headings printed in script are not easily read and are out of harmony with the typewritten letter. A bank or other institution that has been established for several decades and that originally had a script letterhead may, of course, retain it because of its good-will value.



Examples of Good Letterheads

909. The head may be lithographed, engraved, or printed, and the color should usually be black. Other colors are sometimes effectively used, but black ink on white paper is the safe and correct form.

91

The Heading

910. When the heading is wholly typewritten or written by hand, it is placed close to the top of the first page of the letter and near the right-hand margin. The distance from top and margin depends on the length of the letter. A short letter centered on the page naturally has the heading lower and farther in than a long letter occuping the whole of the page. In no case should the heading be less than an inch from the top and three-quarters of an inch from the margin.

911. The heading contains the street address (or equivalent), the city address, the state address, and the date. The following forms are correct:

25 West Eighth St.,
New York City,
July 8, 1920.

[Or]

25 West Eighth St.,
New York City,
July 8, 1920.

NOTE.—If a printed letterhead is used, the written heading usually contains only the date. Sometimes the printed letterhead contains several city addresses; for example, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Francisco. In this case it may be necessary to write

also the city address of the branch office from which the letter is sent.

912. No word or sign should be placed before the street number.

Wrong: No. 33 Main St.,
Waterbury, Connecticut.

913. Numeric names of streets and avenues up to and including ten should be spelled out in full.

Wrong: 754 5th Avenue.
Right: 754 Fifth Avenue.

914. The date should consist of the month, the number of the day, and the number of the year. Do not use a number for the month and do not abbreviate the year.

Wrong: 8–5–'20.
8/5/'20.
Right: August 5, 1920.

NOTE.—Although on the face of it the use of the number of the month and of the year seems to be more efficient than the use of the month written out in full, nevertheless, the reader is often confused in trying to find out exactly what month is meant. In many European countries 8–5–'20 would be read the 8th of May, 1920.

915. In ordinary business letters the numbers and the date should not be written out in full.

Wrong: May fifth, Nineteen hundred and twenty.

NOTE.—In certain cases, however, such as official letters, the date is spelled out to secure a greater formality.

916. The number of the day should not be followed by *d, nd, rd, st,* or *th,* if it is used as a part of a complete date.

Incorrect: May 5th, 1920.
Correct: May 5, 1920.

NOTE.—This rule holds good when referring in the body of the letter to the date. It is permissible, however, to use such forms as "the 10th of May."

917. The entire heading, even though it be short, should never be written on one line. As a rule, the date is on a separate line.

92

The Inside Address or Superscription

920. The name and address of the person or group to whom an ordinary business letter is directed are written below the heading and begin three-quarters of an inch or more from the left-hand edge of the paper. The distance below the heading depends on the length of the letter. A short letter, to be centered on the page, must have more space between the heading and the inside address than a long letter which occupies the full page. The first line always begins at the margin. The other lines may also begin at the margin (block form) or may be indented increasing amounts (pyramid form). Both the following arrangements are correct:

The Smith Hardware Company,
35 Broadway,
New York City.

[Or]

The Smith Hardware Company,
35 Broadway,
New York City.

921. The inside address includes the name of the individual or group, and usually the complete mailing address. The street address need not be given, but the better usage is to include it.

922. In addressing an individual in a company, corporation, association, or other group, it is customary to write the individual's name on the first line, together with his official title, if any, and the name of the company or other group on the second line.

Right: Mr. Cyrus H. K. Curtis, President,
The Curtis Publishing Company,
Independence Square,
Philadelphia, Pa.

NOTE.—A title that consists of more than two words may be written on a separate line between the name of the individual and the name of the group.

Right: Professor James Melvin Lee,
Head of the Department of Journalism,
New York University,
New York City.

923. Do not use the word *city* alone in the inside address. In large cities, particularly, letters so addressed are liable to go astray.

Wrong: Mr. John Jones,
413 Seventh Avenue,
City.

924. According to custom some title precedes the name of the person or firm. The commonest titles are: *Mrs.*, *Miss*, *Mr.*, *Messrs.*, *Dr.*, *Hon.*, *Rev.*, *Prof.*

NOTE.—It should be noted that the title *Miss* is not now considered an abbreviated form and therefore is not followed by a period.

925. The title *Esq.* (Esquire) follows the name of a person. In business letters, however, it is at present very little used. When it is used, omit the title *Mr.*

THE SAUMS PRODUCTS COMPANY
50 CAVRCA STREET [illegible] NEW YORK

May 8, 1920.

Mr. Arthur L. Crosby,
1950 East 57th Street,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Sir:

I have carefully considered your letter of May 6 in which you outlined a marketing campaign to be used in your sales territory.

The campaign as a whole commends itself to me with the exception of the recommendation that less money should be spent on newspaper advertising. This is a matter which I wish to take under advisement, and accordingly, I shall not discuss it until you come to New York City on May 22 when we can go over the entire question in detail.

I was glad to note that your sales for March and April showed a considerable increase.

Very truly yours,

H.C. Athins

President.

[illegible]

Arrangement of Business Letter (*Block Form*)

THE SAUMS PRODUCTS COMPANY
50 CAVRCA STREET - - - - NEW YORK

May 8, 1920.

Mr. Arthur L. Crosby,
1950 East 57th Street,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Sir:

I have carefully considered your letter of May 5 in which you outlined a marketing campaign to be used in your sales territory.

The campaign as a whole commends itself to me with the exception of the recommendation that less money should be spent on newspaper advertising. This is a matter which I wish to take under advisement, and accordingly, I shall not discuss it until you come to New York City on May 22 when we can go over the entire question in detail.

I was glad to note that your sales for March and April showed a considerable increase.

Very truly yours,

H. C. Atkins

President.

H. C. Atkins - EMC

Arrangement of Business Letter (Indented Form)

Wrong: Mr. Francis T. Jones, Esq.
Right: Francis T. Jones, Esq.

[Or]

Mr. Francis T. Jones.

NOTE.—The title *Esq.* is preferred for addressing men in the British Empire.

926. The title *Messrs.* (not *Messers.* or *Mess.*) is an abbreviation of *Messieurs* and is used in addressing a group of men, such as a professional firm or partnership of two or more individuals. It is not used in addressing a corporation or other organization that has an impersonal name. It may be omitted in addressing an ordinary mercantile partnership.

Right: Messrs. Meyer and Ayers,
Chicago, Illinois.

[Or]

Meyer and Ayers,
Chicago, Illinois.

Wrong: Messrs. U. S. Steel Corporation.
Right: The U. S. Steel Corporation.

927. Initials indicating degrees, societies, or other honors acquired by an individual, may follow his name. Care should be taken to see that they are not used when they are suggested by the title of respect preceding his name. Similarly avoid using the initials of a succession of university degrees unless they are in different fields; use only the initials of the highest degree.

Wrong: Dr. Tasker Howard, M. D.
Right: Dr. Tasker Howard
Right: Tasker Howard, M. D.

Wrong: Prof. Lee Galloway, A. B., A. M., Ph. D.
Right: Prof. Lee Galloway, Ph. D.
But,
Right: Dean Joseph French Johnson, D. C. S., LL.D.

928. In addressing officials of governments and of churches, care should be taken to use the title of respect which custom has prescribed. Most of these titles should not be used with the last name alone, as *Rev.* Jones, *Reverend* Jones, *Honorable* Smith. The following are among the more important titles:

President of the United States—*The President* [Name not required]

Cabinet Officers—*Honorable*

Honorable John W. Weeks,
Secretary of War,
Washington, D. C.

Senators—*Senator* or *Honorable*

Senator Gilbert Hitchcock,
Washington, D. C.

[Or]

Honorable Gilbert Hitchcock,
U. S. Senate,
Washington, D. C.

Congressmen—*Honorable*

Governors of States—*His Excellency*

His Excellency, Nathan L. Miller,
Albany, N. Y.

Mayors—*His Honor* or *Honorable*

Other Public Officials—*Honorable*

Clergymen—*Reverend* or *Rev.* [Use abbreviation only with full name.]

Dean (ecclesiastical)—*Very Reverend*

Bishop—*Right Reverend*

Archbishop—*Most Reverend*

Cardinal—*His Eminence*

Pope—*His Holiness*

NOTE.—These and similar titles are used comparatively little in business communications; their chief use is in official correspondence.

929. In official letters the inside address is placed in the lower left-hand part of the letter, slightly below the signature, but beginning at the left-hand margin.

93

The Salutation

930. The complimentary address at the beginning of a letter is called the salutation. In business letters it is practically limited to four forms: *Dear Sir*, *Gentlemen*, *Dear Madam*, and *Ladies* or *Mesdames*. *Dear Madam* is used in addressing a woman, whether married or unmarried. More formality is shown by the use of the salutation *My dear Sir* or *My dear Madam*. Note that the first letter of the second word is not a capital. In exceptional cases, as in writing to government officials, the plain and highly formal *Sir* is used. If the writer is personally acquainted with the addressee or has corresponded with him before, he may use *My dear* Mr. Fox or *Dear* Mr. Fox.

931. The salutation should be written directly below the inside address and the same distance from the edge of the paper as the first line of the inside address. It should always occupy a line by itself.

Brooks Brothers,
Madison Ave. and 44th St.,
New York City.

Gentlemen:

932. Never use the salutations *Dear Friend*, *My dear Friend*, and *Dear Miss*.

933. Do not use the abbreviation *Messrs.* as a salutation.

Wrong: Rogers Peet Co.,
New York City.

Messrs.:

Right: Rogers Peet Co.,
New York City.

Gentlemen:

934. *Dear Sirs* is still used by some banking houses and other conservative institutions, but seems to be practically obsolete elsewhere.

935. In addressing such firms as *John Wanamaker* or *James Butler, Inc.*, the correct salutation is *Gentlemen* because these firms are corporations. This is the correct form for any firm composed of men.

936. Never use a name alone as a salutation.

Wrong: Mr. John Heaton:
Will you let me know . . .

Right: My dear Mr. Heaton:
Will you let me know . . .

937. Avoid such abbreviated forms as *D'r, Gents, S'r.*

938. The salutation is followed by a colon or a comma, never by a semicolon. The dash is unnecessary.

939. In official letters the salutation is *Sir, Sirs,* or sometimes *Gentlemen.*

94

The Body of the Letter

940. Before the letter is written or typed the writer should estimate the amount of material it will contain and the space it will occupy. He should then plan to arrange it so that it will be centered a little above the mathematical center of the page. The margins of white

space at the sides should never be less than three-quarters of an inch; they should be much wider if the letter is short. The white space above and below the letter should be greater than that at the sides. At the left-hand side, the body of the letter should be in alignment with the beginning of the inside address and the salutation.

941. All paragraphs are to be indented an equal distance from the margin, say ten spaces or one inch, regardless of the length of the salutation. It is also wise to use double space between the paragraphs. Some firms use no indention but begin each paragraph flush with the margin. In this case paragraphs are indicated by double or triple spacing between the paragraphs. In the illustrations on pages 206 and 207 may be seen the correct forms of a typewritten letter.

942. If the letter is written in handwriting, the space between the paragraphs should be double that between other lines.

943. Only one side of the paper should be used, whether the letter is written in handwriting or typed. When more than one sheet is necessary to contain the message, plain sheets without the letterhead, but of the same size and material as the letterhead, should be used. At the top of these additional sheets is placed the number of the sheet and the initials or the name of the firm or person to whom the letter is sent, as

The Eastern Manufacturing Company 2.

944. If a second page is necessary, care should be taken to see that it contains at least three lines of the body of the letter.

95

The Complimentary Close

950. The complimentary close is placed two or three spaces below the body of the letter and usually begins midway between the right and left-hand margins.

951. The following forms are most used in business letters: *Yours truly, Truly yours, Very truly yours, Yours very truly, Yours respectfully.*

952. Sometimes in place of *truly*, it is permissible to use *Cordially*, or *Sincerely*, though these should usually be reserved for cases where there is an established acquaintanceship between writer and reader.

953. Forms like *Yours for more business, Yours for a big year* are incorrect and usually vulgar.

NOTE.—When a form is adopted by common consent, as *Yours for the Fourth Liberty Loan*, the departure from customary usage is justifiable.

954. Do not use any abbreviation such as *Y'rs* or *Resp'y* in the complimentary close. Do not write *respectively* for *respectfully*. Do not use *and oblige*, in place of a complimentary close.

955. In the complimentary close only the first word should begin with a capital. The proper punctuation at the end is a comma.

956. Such expressions as *I am, Believe me*, and *I beg to remain* should not be used as a part of or a prelude to the complimentary close.

957. In official letters the complimentary close is *Respectfully, Respectfully submitted*, or *Yours respectfully.*

958. The innovation in writing the complimentary close at the left in alignment with the left-hand type margin has little to recommend it and does not seem likely to receive general adoption. The space there is necessary for other purposes.

96

The Signature

960. The signature contains everything necessary to fix responsibility for the letter. Sometimes it consists only of the name of the writer; sometimes it includes also the name of the firm or other group whom he represents and in whose interests he is writing.

961. The signature follows the complimentary close a little below and to the right so that it ends at the right-hand margin.

962. In letters from firms, the firm name should be typewritten and below it should come the written signature of the person directly responsible for the letter. If he is an official, his signature should be followed by his title, as *President*, *Secretary*, *Cashier*, and the like. This title should be typewritten. If he is not an official, his signature may be preceded by the word *by*.

963. The signature of the writer, if a man, should not be preceded by any title, such as *Mr.*, *Prof.*, or *Dr.*

964. A married woman signs her full name (this includes her maiden name) and places immediately below, in parentheses, the name used in her mailing address.

Anna Templeton Parsons
(Mrs. Edward F. Parsons)

965. An unmarried woman signs her name with *Miss* in parentheses before it. The practice of omitting (Miss) seems to be growing in favor, doubtless on the assumption that it will be taken for granted if the name is feminine. Initials in such cases cause confusion.

966. If the writer's signature is not easily decipherable and if his name does not appear on the letterhead, it is wise to insure against misdirection by typing his name at the lower left-hand corner, together with the initials of the stenographer, as R. C. Cholmondeley — H. W. In other cases only his initials should be used, as R. C. C. — H. W.

967. A rubber-stamp signature is incorrect. All letters that are worthy of a reader's attention are worthy of the writer's personal attention to the extent of a pen-written signature.

968. Such expressions as *Dictated but signed in my absence, Dictated but not corrected after transcribed, Dictated but not read, Dictated but not signed,* etc., should never be used, for they are discourteous to the reader of the letter.

97

Miscellaneous Points

970. Unnecessary material outside the body of the letter should be avoided, as it is distracting to the reader. Facts that are useful to the writer only should be placed in the least conspicuous position, preferably the lower left-hand corner.

971. Inclosures should be indicated by the abbreviation *Incl.* placed next to the left-hand margin, below the initials of dictator and transcriber; e. g., 3 *incls.*

972. Reference numbers for filing and other purposes may be placed above the body of the letter, just below the date; e. g., *In replying, refer to A* 407.

973. The personal attention of a certain individual in a firm is secured to a matter of the firm's business by the expression *Attention of Mr. Blank* written in the center of the page. This may be placed below the salutation or above the inside address. The former position is preferable. The salutation should agree, however, with the firm addressed; e. g., *Gentlemen* rather than *Dear Sir.*

974. The postscript is sometimes added to business letters. The letters P. S., however, are no longer used to label it. Formerly the postscript was used to express some idea which had been forgotten. Now, whenever it is employed, it is for the purpose of emphasizing some important idea; for example, "Remember—in order to take advantage of this offer we must receive your post-card by April 24." Since it is prominent by its position, it should be used to contain an important idea and not simply the last thought of the writer.

975. In folding the letter, fold up the bottom edge until it is exactly even with the top edge or one-half inch from the top edge, and crease; then fold over from the right a little more than one-third of the letter and crease. The remainder of the letter is folded over from the left. The free edge of the letter is thus slightly separated from the right-hand crease. It should be placed in the envelope with the free edge toward yourself.

976. If the letter is to be inclosed in a window envelope (one with a transparent oval to obviate the necessity of writing the address twice), it must, of course, be folded so that the inside address will show through the "window" in proper position.

98

The Envelope

980. In business correspondence the envelope is usually of the standard size, $6\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{8}$ inches. For long letters the No. 10 or legal size may be used. The return address of the sender should always be printed or written in the upper left-hand corner. It should not be large or conspicuous, and should never be used for advertising purposes. In many cases, as in sales letters to women and professional classes, a return card or return address is printed on the flap of the envelope. This gives more of a social appearance to the letter and is of aid in getting better results from these classes. In such cases the size of the envelope used is that commonly called "Baronial," which measures about 4 x 5 inches. (The post-office authorities, however, disapprove of the use of the back flap for the return card, and have taken steps to discourage the practice.)

981. The address should begin slightly below the middle of the envelope and should be well centered. Two forms are used, just as in the inside address.

The Smith Hardware Company,
35 Broadway,
New York City.

[Or]

The Smith Hardware Company,
35 Broadway,
New York City.

982. When the straight-edge or block form is used in the inside address this form should be used also on the envelope. The main thing to be considered is that the address should be well balanced.

983. The order of the address is usually as follows: first line, name of addressee; second line, street address or box number; third line, city or town, and state or country; or state or country may be placed on a fourth line.

984. The personal attention of a certain individual in a firm is secured to a matter of the firm's business by the expression (*Attention of Mr. Blank*) placed in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope.

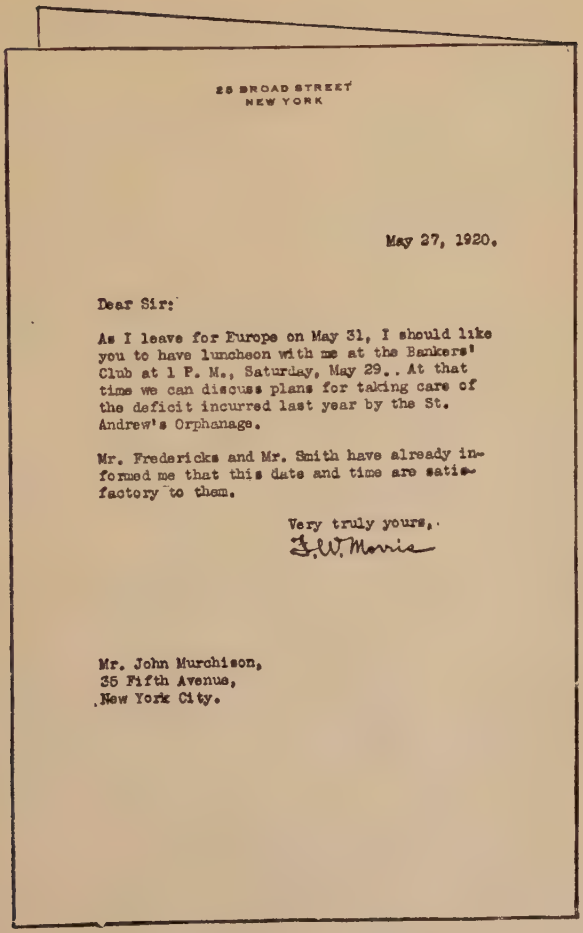
985. The envelope and the letter should have no unsightly blots, fingerprints, or erasures. It is better to rewrite the letter entirely than to take any chance of marring the effect of an otherwise perfect page by any of these blemishes.

99

Official Letters

990. Official letters are used in writing about matters that are outside the scope of regular business. Any letter that is written by or to an official, or to a business man on any other question than those which come up in the regular routine of business, may be considered an official letter.

991. The stationery used in these letters is different from that used for other business communications. As a rule, it is of folder form like social stationery, and may be smaller in size than the 8½ x 11 business sheet. When four-page folder sheets are used the fold should be at the right, or, in other words, that page which is ordinarily the back page of a folder is the first page to be written on. If a second page is necessary, the other outside page



25 BROAD STREET
NEW YORK

May 27, 1920.

Dear Sir:

As I leave for Europe on May 31, I should like you to have luncheon with me at the Bankers' Club at 1 P. M., Saturday, May 29.. At that time we can discuss plans for taking care of the deficit incurred last year by the St. Andrew's Orphanage.

Mr. Fredericks and Mr. Smith have already informed me that this date and time are satisfactory to them.

Very truly yours,
F. W. Morris

Mr. John Murchison,
35 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

Personal Letter in Official Form

is used. When three or four pages are to be written on, the best order is the natural, as 1, 2, 3, 4; and not, 1, 2, 4, 3, or 1, 4, 2, 3.

992. The printed material on the letterhead should be reduced to the minimum. Usually it contains only the name, official business, and address of the sender; sometimes only the address.

Formal Official Letters

993. There are two classes of official letters, the formal and the informal. The formal letter is sent to government officials, members of Congress, and others in high position.

994. The mechanical form of the formal official letter differs from that of other business letters. The inside address is written at the close of the letter at the left-hand side. In it, all titles are given in full. No abbreviations should be used except initials of degrees, societies, etc., as *LL.D.*, *F. R. G. S.*

995. The salutation is *Sir* or *Sirs*. The complimentary close is *Respectfully* or *Very respectfully*.

996. In the body of the letter, the strictest formality is observed. No abbreviations or colloquial expressions are permissible. Very frequently the third person is used throughout in speaking of the writer. The language is stately, formal, and dignified to the point of coldness.

Informal Official Letters

997. Informal official letters are used between business men who are on terms of familiarity with one another, about matters outside the routine of business. The very informal, conversational tone is desirable. The

informal official letter has character, whereas the formal official letter is characterless.

998. As in the formal official letter, the inside address is at the lower left-hand corner of the sheet at the end of the letter.

999. The salutation is informal, as *Dear Johnston*, *Dear Mr. Johnston*, *Dear Fred*, or any other salutation the writer pleases to use. The complimentary close may be *Sincerely*, *Cordially*, or *Faithfully*, and others of like tenor.

INDEX

(Numbers refer to rules.)

A

A, an, correct use of, 540; use with *one*, 540; incorrect after *kind of, sort of*, 794
Abbreviations, list of, 593; incorrect forms, 937
Ability, capacity, correct use of, 540
Accept, except, correct use of, 540
Accountants' reports, 633
Adaptation in substance, 110–117; of language, 210–215; to the reader, 211; of words, 510–516; in the report, 610–612
Address, inside, 920–929 (See Inside address)
Adjectives, confused with adverbs, 790, 792; after such verbs as *look, sound*, etc., 791; preceding *sort, kind*, 793; use of comparative degree, 795
Adverbs, confused with adjectives, 790, 791, 792; double negative, 796
Advise, correct use of, 540
Affect, effect, correct use of, 540
Aggravate, correct use of, 540
All ready, already, correct use of, 540
All right, 540
Almost, most, correct use of, 540
Alternative, choice, correct use of, 540
Ambiguity in a letter, 225; through faulty use of pronouns, 737
Among, between, correct use of, 540
Amount, number, correct use of, 540
An, a, correct use of, 540
Anyplace, everyplace, etc., correct use of, 540
Apostrophe, with possessive case, 710–715, 813; in abbreviations, 811, 813, 899; to indicate plural of figures, etc., 818; omitted from certain abbreviations, 899
Appositive, case of, 727
Appreciate, correct use of, 540
Approximo, incorrect use of, 561
Apt, liable, likely, correct use of, 540
As, confusing use of, 551, 552
As, like, correct use of, 540
As, that, correct use of, 540
As . . . as, so . . . as, correct use of, 540
As per, use of, 540
At about, incorrect use of, 540
Attention of, position in letter, 973; salutation after, 973; on envelope, 984
Awful, incorrect use of, 540

B

Badly, incorrect use of, 540
Balance, remainder, rest, use of, 540
Bank on, use of, 540
Beg, use of, 540
Beginning of letters, 161–163, 261–264; of advertisement, 165; of report, 164, 631; of paragraph, 361
Beside, besides, use of, 540
Best, use of, 540
Best of any, incorrect, 540
Between, among, correct use of, 540

INDEX

(Numbers refer to rules.)

Blame it on, incorrect, 540
Body of letter, 940–944; arrangement of typed matter, 940, 941; space between paragraphs, 942; second sheet, 943, 944
Both, each, correct use of, 540
Bound, determine, correct use of, 540
Brackets, use of, 807, 869
Bring, carry, fetch, take, correct use of, 540
Business English, purpose of, 101; psychology of, 107; differs from literary English, 109; golden rule of, 110, 210; technique of, 200, 205
Business policy, good, 190
Business reports, 600–691; defined, 600; purpose, 601; kinds, 602; adaptation in, 610–612; qualities of, 620–623; unity in, 630–638; beginning of, 631; accountants' reports, 633–636; coherence in, 640–649; making outline of, 640–649; connection in, 650; emphasis in, 660–663; proportion in, 670–673; tone in, 680–684; style in, 690–691
But, incorrect use of, 540
But that, use of, 540
But what, use of, 540

C

C's, The Five, 120–128, 220–229
Can, may, correct use of, 540
Cannot but, use of, 540
Can't seem, incorrect, 540
Capacity, ability, correct use of, 540
Capitalization, purpose of, 800, 870; rules of, 870–878; to secure emphasis, 887
Carry, bring, fetch, take, correct use of, 540
Character, quality of, defined, 127, 229
Character, reputation, correct use of, 540
Choice, alternative, correct use of, 540
Clearness, quality of, defined, 123, 222
Climax in the sentence, 471
Collective nouns, number of, 748, 755
Colon, to indicate separation, 803; between hours and minutes, 812; after salutation, 819; between independent clauses, 857; preceding a series of clauses, etc., 858; preceding a long quotation, 859
Comma, indicates smallest degree of separation, 801; with omission of words, 814; to divide numbers, 816; after salutation, 819; in a series of words, etc., 821; in a series of adjectives or adverbs, 822; with an appositive, 823; with dates and addresses, 824; with connectives, 825; with participial phrases, 826; with short quotations, 828; with sentence elements, 829; with quoted sentence, 836; when dependent clause precedes independent, 842; when dependent clause breaks continuity of independent clause, 843; with non-restrictive clause, 844; in compound sentence, 851; "comma" fault, 852; unnecessary after lines in address, 897
"Comma" fault, 436, 852
Common, mutual, correct use of, 540
Complimentary close, 950–958; of official letters, 995, 999
Conciseness, quality of, defined, 125, 227
Concrete words, 562
Connection of ideas, 150–153; in

INDEX

(Numbers refer to rules.)

the letter, 250–257; within the paragraph, 350–358; within the sentence, 450–459; words used for, 550–555; in the report, 650

Connectives, 453–458, 550–555; confusing use of *as* and *since*, 551; use of *as*, etc., for *that* or *whether*, 552; confusing use of *while*, 553; list of, 554

Consul, council, counsel, use of, 540

Coördination and subordination in sentences, 450–459

Correctness, quality of, defined, 124, 226

Correlatives, position of, 445; use of, 455

Courtesy, quality of, defined, 126, 228

Custom, habit, correct use of, 540

D

Dash, to indicate abrupt change, 806; to join numbers, 817; to secure emphasis, 863, 864; to secure pause, 865; after unfinished statements, 866; to suggest haste, 883

Data, plural of *datum*, 540

Date, 914, 915, 916

Deal, incorrect use of, 540

Determine, bound, correct use of, 540

Differ from, differ with, use of, 540

Different than, incorrect, 540

Directly, incorrectly used, 540

Disagree, followed by *with*, 540

Don't, incorrect use of, 540

Double negative, the, 796

Due to, use of, 540

E

Each, both, correct use of, 540

Each other, one another, use of, 540

Editorial manual, 904

Effect, affect, correct use of, 540

Either, neither, use of, 540

Else, use of, 540

Emphasis, of the thought, 160–165; in the letter, 260–269; by proportion, 270–273; by position, 160–165, 260–269, 360–362; by repetition, 271–272; by mechanical means, 273; in paragraph, 360–362, 370–373; in sentence, 460–469, 470–471; through word use, 560–567, 570–572; in the report, 660–663; by underlining, 886; by capitalization, 887

Ending of letters, 265–269; of paragraph, 362, 372; of sentence, 462, 463

Enormity, enormousness, use of, 540

Enthuse, not in good use, 540

Envelope, 980–985; size, etc., 980; arrangement of address on, 981, 983; consistent form, 982; *Attention of*, 984; appearance of, 985

Esteemed, obsolete use of, 540

Euphemism, 585

Euphony in the sentence, 480–482; in words, 584

Everyplace, anyplace, etc., correct use of, 540

Except, incorrectly used, 540

Except, accept, correct use of, 540

Exceptional, exceptionable, use of, 540

Exclamation point, use of, 805, 833, 834; with parenthetical expression, 836; to suggest irony, 882

Expect, suppose, suspect, use of, 540

F

Farther, further, use of, 540

Favor, incorrect use of, 540

INDEX

(Numbers refer to rules.)

Fetch, bring, carry, take, correct use of, 540
Fewer, less, use of, 540
Figurative language, 563; faults of, 564
Find, locate, use of, 540
Five C's, 120–128, 220–229
Folding the letter, 975, 976
Forceful diction, 560–567
Form paragraphs, use of, 390–396; reason for, 390, 391; how selected, 392; unity in, 393; how used, 395
Former, latter, use of, 540
Functions of the paragraph, 300–306

G

Gender, agreement in, 740–744
Genitive case (See Possessive case)
Gerund, use of, 780, 783, 785; defined, 780
Golden rule of business English, 110, 210
Got, use of, 540
Gotten, obsolete, 540
Grammar, 700–796; defined, 700; idioms, 702, 703; awkward constructions, 704; nouns and pronouns, possessive case, 710–716; pronouns—as subject and object, 720–727; reference of pronouns, 730–737; pronouns—agreement in gender and number, 740–748; verbs—agreement in number and person, 750–759; tense, 760–768; mood, 770–771; participles, gerunds, infinitives, 780–787; adjectives and adverbs, 790–796

H

Habit, custom, correct use of, 540
Hackneyed and trite expressions, 561, 564e
Had of, incorrect, 540
Had ought, incorrect, 540
Hanged, hung, use of, 540
Hardly, use of, 540
Heading of business letter, written, 910–917
Healthy, healthful, wholesome, use of, 540
Help, incorrect use of, 540
House style, 297; in word use, 590–593
Hyphen, use of to suggest deliberateness, 884; to suggest novelty, 885; position of, 895; omission of, 898

I

Ideas, order of, 140–143; connection of, 150–153; emphasis of, 160–165; proportion of, 170–174; tone in, 180–182
Idioms, 702, 703, 711
Imply, infer, use of, 540
In, incorrect use of, 540
Inclosures, how indicated, 971
Infer, imply, use of, 540
Infinitives, agent of action must be expressed, 786; tense of, 787
Inside address, 920–929; arrangement of, 920; content of, 921; position of title, 922; *city* incorrectly used, 923; titles in, 924–928; position of, in official letters, 929
Inside of, incorrect use of, 540
Instant, incorrect use of, 561
Intensives, 572
Its, it's, use of, 540

K

Kind, sort, number of, 540, 793
Kind of, sort of, not followed by *a* or *an,* 540, 794
Kindly, position of, 540

INDEX

(Numbers refer to rules.)

L

Language, adaptation of, 210–215
Latter, former, use of, 540
Lay, lie, use of, 540
Lead, led, confused, 540
Leave, let, use of, 540
Led, lead, confused, 540
Less, fewer, use of, 540
Let, leave, use of, 540
Letterhead, size, color, quality, 905–909; illustrations of, page 201; of official letter, 991, 992
Letters, beginning of, 161–163, 261–264; model, 202; ending of, 265–269; tone of, 280–289; style of, 290–297
Liable, apt, likely, correct use of, 540
Lie, lay, use of, 540
Like, as, correct use of, 540
Likely, apt, liable, correct use of, 540
Line, incorrect use of, 540
Locate, find, use of, 540
Lose, loose, confused, 540
Lot, lots, use of, 540

M

Majority, plurality, most, distinguished, 540
Many, much, use of, 540
Margins in letter, 940
May, can, correct use of, 540
Mechanical display of letter, 900–999; general considerations of, 900–909; the heading, 910–917; inside address, 920–929; salutation, 930–939; body of letter, 940–944; complimentary close, 950–958; signature, 960–968; miscellaneous points, 970–976; envelope, 980–985; official letters, 990–999; illustrations of, pages 206, 207, 219
Misrelated participle, 781
Misuses of words, 540
Model letters, 202
Most, almost, correct use of, 540
Much, omission of, 423
Much, many, use of, 540
Much, too, very, use of, 540
Must of, incorrect, 540
Mutual, common, correct use of, 540
Myself, use of, 540

N

Near, incorrect use of, 540
Negative, double, 796
Negative suggestion by words, 564c, 565, 581, 584, 585
Neither, either, use of, 540
Nominative and objective case, 720–727
Non-restrictive clause, punctuation of, 844–845; defined, 845
None, number of, 745
Notoriety, notorious, use of, 540
Number, amount, correct use of, 540
Number, agreement in, pronouns, 740, 745–748; verbs, 750–756; of *kind, sort*, 793

O

Objective case, 720–727; with participle, 780
Obscurity in letter, 223
Of, incorrect use of, 540
Off of, incorrect use, 540
Official letters, 990–999; defined, 990; stationery used, 991; formal, 993; differences in form, 994; salutation and close, 995; tone in, 996; informal, 997; salutation and close, 999; illustration of mechanical display of, page 219

INDEX

(Numbers refer to rules.)

Omissions, in sentences, 420–429; of articles, 421; of prepositions, 422; of adjectives and adverbs, 423; of *much*, 423; of nouns, 424; of verbs, 425; of words needed to complete comparisons, 426–427; after *any* and *all*, 426, 428; to complete thought consistently, 429

One, use of, 540

One another, each other, use of, 540

Ones, incorrect use of, 540

Only, position of, 540

Onto, incorrect use of, 540

Order, of ideas, 140–143; in the letter, 240; in the paragraph, 340–347; in the sentence, 440–445; in the report, 640

Outlines, 640–649

P

Paragraph, definitions of, 300; functions of, 300–306; length, 310–319; essentials of, 320–322; unity in, 330–339; how to, 336–339; order in, 340–347; narrative order of, 341; chronological order of, 341; descriptive order of, 324; deductive order of, 343; inductive order of, 344; climactic order of, 345, 371; amplifying, 346; contrast order of, 347; connection in, 350–358; emphasis in, 360–362; proportion in, 370–373; repetition in, 373; tone of, 380–384; variety in, 384; form, 390–396

Paragraphing, determined by functions, 336; suitable to message, 381; variety in, 384

Parallel construction, 450

Parentheses, use of, 807, 835; punctuation within, 836

Partial, use of, 540

Participle, absolute, 467; use of, 780–784; definition, 780; misrelated, 781; tense of, 784

Party, incorrect use of, 540

Per cent, percentage, use of, 540

Period, to indicate separation, 804; after abbreviations, 811; with omission of words, 815; after sentence, 831; to indicate emphasis, 862; unnecessary after numerals, 896

Plenty, incorrect use of, 540

Plurality, majority, most, distinguished, 540

Policy, good business, 190

Possessive case, 710–716; with gerund, 780

Posted, incorrect use of, 540

Postscript, use of, 974

Practicable, practical, use of, 540

Prefer, completion of, 540

Prepositions, use with verbs, 555

Pretentious words, 570

Principal, principle, distinguished, 540

Pronoun, possessive case of, 710–716; as subject and object, 720–727; reference of, 730–737; agreement in gender and number, 740–748

Proportion, of thought, 170–174; emphasis secured by, 270–272; in the paragraph, 370–373; in the report, 670–673

Propose, use of, 540

Proposition, use of, 540

Provided, providing, use of, 540

Punctuation, 800–869; defined, 800; to indicate separation, 801–804; (For specific uses, see in this index, comma, semicolon, etc.); arbitrary uses of punctuation, 810–819; separations of small units, 820–829; separations of sentences, 830–837; relationships within complex sentences, 840–846; relationships

in compound sentences, 850–859; for emphasis, 860–869; tone as affected by punctuation, 880–887; good style in punctuation, 890–899
Purpose, see *propose*, 540

Q

Qualities, of writing, 120–128, 220–229; of a business report, 620–623
Quantity, use of, 540
Question mark, after question, 805–832; with parenthetical expression, 836; to suggest doubt, 881
Quotation marks, use of, 808, 827, 868; for emphasis, 867; with other punctuation marks, 894
Quotations, how punctuated, 894

R

Rarely ever, use of, 540
Real, use of, 540
Reason is, the, use of, 540
Remainder, balance, rest, use of, 540
Repetition to secure emphasis, 271, 373, 470; unnecessary, 272, 496; to secure connection, 256, 357
Reports (See Business reports)
Reputation, character, correct use of, 540
Rest, balance, remainder, use of, 540
Restrictive clause, punctuation of, 845; definition of, 845
Revision of sentences, 406
Rhetorical question, punctuation after, 823

S

Salutation, forms of, 930; position of, 931; incorrect forms, 932–933, 937; *Dear Sirs*, 934; with corporations, 935; punctuation of, 938; in official letters, 939, 995, 999; after *Attention of* ——, 973
Same, incorrect use of, 540
Scarcely, after negatives, 540, 796
Seldom or ever, incorrect, 540
Semicolon, to indicate separation, 802; when conjunction is omitted, 853; with weak connectives, 854; between independent clauses, 855, 856; to indicate emphasis, 861
Sentence, topic, 334; definition of, 401–402; revision of, 406; length, 410–418; clearness in, 420; omissions in, 420–426; consistency of, 427–429; unity in, 430–436; coherence in, 440–445; coördination and subordination, 450–459; emphasis secured by position, 460–469; emphasis secured by proportion, 470–471; euphony in, 480–482; variety in, 490–496; loose, 492; periodic, 493; balanced, 494; inversion, 495; unnecessary repetition, 496
Shall and *will*, correct use of, 763–767
Should and *would*, 766
Should of, incorrect, 540
Show up, vulgarism, 540
Signature, 960–968
Size, sized, use of, 540
Size up, vulgarism, 540
So . . . as, as . . . as, correct use of, 540
Some, incorrect use of, 540
Some place for *somewhere*, 540
Sort, kind, number of, 540, 793
Sort of, kind of, use of, 540
Specific words, 566
Spelling, 530–532; words commonly confounded, 531; words often misspelled, 532

(Numbers refer to rules.)

"Split" infinitive, 443
Stenographer's initials, 966
Style, of the letter, 290–297; of a business house, 297; in diction, 590–593; in the report, 690–691; in punctuation, 890–899
Subjunctive mood, 770–771
Such, incorrect use of, 540; completed by *that*, 540
Suggestion, by figurative language, 564c; by word use, 565, 581, 582, 584, 585
Superlatives, crude use of, 567
Suppose, expect, suspect, use of, 540
Suspect, expect, suppose, use of, 540

T

Take, use of, 540
Take, bring, carry, fetch, correct use of, 540
Tautology, 571
Technique, of business English, 200–205; golden rule of, 110, 210
Tense, 760–767; past, 761; perfect, 762; future, 763–767; *shall* and *will*, 763–767; independent clause, 768; of infinitives, 787
That, as relative pronoun, 540
That, as, correct use of, 540
That there, vulgarism, 540
Therefore, therefor, distinguished, 540
These here, vulgarism, 540
These kind, incorrect, 540
This here, vulgarism, 540
Through, incorrect use of, 540
Till, until, use of, 540
Titles in address, position of, 922; common, 924; *Esq.*, 925; *Messrs.*, 926; initials, 927; list of, 928; position of, in business letters, 922
To, used, for *too*, 540
Tone, in ideas, 180–182; of the letter, 280–289; of paragraphs, 380–384; in diction, 580–586; in the report, 680–684; as affected by punctuation, 880–887
Too, use of, 540
Too, much, very, use of, 540
Topic sentence, 334
Transpire, incorrect use of, 540

U

Ultimo, incorrect use of, 561
Underlining, used to secure emphasis, 273, 886
Unique, use of, 540
Unity, in the thought, 130–138; in the letter, 230–233; test of, 233; in paragraphs, 330–339; in form paragraphs, 393; in sentence, 430–436; in the report, 630–638
Until, till, use of, 540
Up, incorrect use of, 540

V

Vagueness in a letter, 224
Verbs, agreement in number and person, 750–759; tense, 760–768; subjunctive mood, 770–771
Very, much, too, use of, 540
Very, use of, 540

W

Way, use of, 540
Where, incorrectly used, 540
Which, incorrect use of, 540
While, confusing use of, 553
Who, which, that, used as relative pronouns, 540
Wholesome, healthy, healthful, use of, 540
Whose, incorrectly used, 540
Will and *shall*, use of, 763–767
Without, incorrect use of, 540

INDEX

(Numbers refer to rules.)

Words, principles of use, 500–507; definition, 500; developing vocabulary, 507; adaptation of, 510–516; correct usage of, 520–526; slang, 521; spelling, 530–532; list of words confounded, 531; list of words often misspelled, 532; list of common misuses, 540; connecting words, 550–555; forceful diction, 560–567; hackneyed and trite expressions, 561; concrete words, 562; figurative language, 563; faults of, 564; word associations, 565; specific, 566; crude use of superlatives, 567; word emphasis, 570–572; pretentious words, 570; tautology, 571; intensives, 572; tone in diction, 580–586; negative words, 581; atmosphere, 585; style in diction, 590–593; list of abbreviations, 593

Would and *should*, use of, 766

THE END

BUSINESS ENGLISH	0 *General Purposes*	1 *Adaptation to the Reader*	2 *Qualities*	3 *Unity*
Chap. I **The Substance** 1	10 Definition	11 Adaptation	12 Five C's	13 Unity
Chap. II **The Whole Composition** 2	20 Technique	21 Adaptation	22 Qualities	23 Unity
Chap. III **The Paragraph** 3	30 Functions	31 Length	32 Essentials	33 Unity
Chap. IV **The Sentence** 4	40 Definition	41 Length	42 Clearness	43 Unity
Chap. V **The Word** 5	50 Principles	51 Adaptation	52 Correctness	53* Spelling
Chap. VI **The Business Report** 6	60 Functions	61 Adaptation	62 Qualities	63 Unity
Chap. VII **Grammar** 7	70 Definition	71* Possessives	72* Case	73* Reference
Chap. VIII **Punctuation and Capitals** 8	80 Functions	81* Arbitrary Uses	82* Small Separations	83* Sentence Separations
Chap. IX **The Display of the Letter** 9	90 Functions	91* Heading	92* Inside Address	93* Salutation

Complete information explaining the use of this chart is given in the preface.

5 *Connection*	6 *Emphasis*	7 *Proportion*	8 *Tone*	9 *Style*
15 Connection	16 Emphasis	17 Proportion	18 Tone	19 Policy
25 Connection	26 Emphasis	27 Proportion	28 Tone	29 Style
35 Connection	36 Emphasis	37 Proportion	38 Tone	39 Form Paragraphs
45 Connection	46 Emphasis	47 Proportion	48 Euphony	49 Variety
55 Connectives	56 Forceful Diction	57 Proportion	58 Tone	59 Style
65 Connection	66 Emphasis	67 Proportion	68 Tone	69 Style
75* Agreement (verbs)	76* Tense	77* Mood	78* Participles	79* Adjectives and Adverbs
85* In Compound Sentences	86 For Emphasis	87 Capitals	88 For Tone	89 Style
95* Complimentary Close	96* Signature	97* Miscellaneous	98* Envelope	99* Official Letters

These sections do not follow the general scheme of numbering, but are numbered somewhat arbitrarily.